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*Lookin' Eastward*

A G.I. SALAAM TO INDIA





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# *Lookin' Eastward*

A G.I. SALAAM TO INDIA

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By Thomas H. Clare

AS TOLD TO HIS WIFE, IRMA M. CLARE

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1945

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*To Private G.I., whose ready wit and  
irrepressible good nature have been a  
constant source of amusement and in-  
spiration, we dedicate this little volume.*

THOMAS H. CLARE

IRMA M. CLARE



## PREFACE

THIS is the story of the American Soldier in India. And it is a true story; true in the sense that each of the tales told is a genuine reflection of what the American Soldier thinks, says, and does. Indeed, most of the incidents which make up this book happened almost exactly as recorded.

It is the author's contention that Private G. I. is the most humorous and best-natured soldier in the world, bar none—apart from his other qualifications. This book may be considered as an argument for this point of view. It is only one of the many which will undoubtedly appear in the course of this war. If it is accepted as a small contribution to the total portrait of Private G. I., we shall be satisfied.

The names of people and places mentioned in these pages are mostly fictitious. In its present form the book is the work of the undersigned. The materials are all drawn from my husband's letters home during his two-year stay in India as Chaplain to the 341st Bombardment Group. Whatever sins are committed in these pages are, therefore, my responsibility.

IRMA M. CLARE

*May, 1944*





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## INDIA-BOUND

IMMEDIATELY upon joining the Army in April, 1942, I requested duty overseas. Say what you like about the red tape in Washington, the government can surely give you service on a request like that. Three months after my induction I was under orders to report for service in India.

On August 2, 1942, I arrived at Charleston, South Carolina, our port of embarkation, ready and packed to sail for Karachi, India. On the way to the dock I wondered if I could get aboard at once and start making myself comfortable for the voyage. Full of this kind of hope, I reported in to the Transport Officer and asked if I might be shown my ship and the accommodations.

"For the present we'll put you in Staging Area Number Two," he said pleasantly. "Then we'll see what we can do."

"But you haven't read my secret orders!" I protested. "I'm to sail for India at once."

"Yes, I understand, and believe me, Chaplain, we're going to get you off as soon as your ship is loaded and ready to sail. In the meantime, report in to Staging Area Number Two, and we'll get word to you when we want you on board. You're on the alert now. So be ready!"

Off I went to Staging Area Number Two, leaving my bags packed and ready since I was expecting a call from the Transport Officer any minute. Late in the afternoon three more chaplains signed in. They, too, had been to the Port to see the Transport Officer and had been told the same thing. Faustner, a Catholic, was from Wisconsin. With his

bald head and glasses he looked a perfect cherub; but he turned out to be a tough baby, believe me, and a pretty swell fellow in the bargain. The other two, Miner and Holt, were Protestants. Miner was a Nazarene from New Mexico; he looked like Savonarola and talked like God; and was just about as much in earnest as both those personages. The last of the trio, Holt, was a Baptist from the South. Those Southern Baptists surely get around; I've met them almost everywhere I've been. And Holt was like the rest of them; they can't look at a fellow cleric without wanting to make a Baptist out of him.

We four chaplains got together, and quickly composed our doctrinal differences for the Duration; then we went in a group to see the Transport Officer to find out what our accommodations were to be.

"We'd like to know—" began Faustner as we approached the T.O. But he got no further.

"Just the men I've been looking for," interrupted the T.O. with a twinkle in his eye. "Have you had your shots yet?"

We mumbled, "Shots?"

"Yes. Take your orders to the dispensary. They'll take care of you there."

Wonderingly, we took ourselves off to the dispensary. All of us had had shots of one kind or another; so we were sure that this was just a formality.

At the dispensary we handed our orders to the sergeant, who looked at us witheringly and then called out to a nurse: "Hey, June! The woiks for these—er—men."

And "the woiks" it was. We got shots for cholera, typhus, typhoid, yellow fever, tetanus, and a vaccination for smallpox to boot. They pulled the harpoons out of us and told us to come back in three days for the rest.

The way we felt the next couple of days, if the boat never sailed, it would have suited us fine. None of us could move an arm, and when we walked, it looked as if we were three little Frankenstein's monsters out for a ramble. As far as I was concerned, I had already earned the highest decoration the Army gives for my bravery in going back for more. All of us got near heart failure every time we saw that sergeant advance upon us.

Within a week we were all feeling pretty good again; at least we were way up there in the chow line; so off we sallied to confront the T.O. once more about our boat and our accommodations; and we hinted plainly that we thought enough valuable time had been wasted.

"Yes," said the T.O. "I've been looking for you men. Have you drawn your overseas equipment?"

We admitted cautiously that we hadn't heard about it.

"No! Well! Take your orders to the Overseas Quartermaster. He'll take care of you."

Off we trooped once more. It took us two days to draw our overseas equipment, and twice that long to learn how to pack it. We drew blankets, a complete pup tent, a bedding roll, mosquito nets, a first-aid kit, and a huge pile of other stuff including all the manuals the Army ever issued. In a few days we were back at the T.O.'s office again, confident that we could have no further delay. He looked at us as innocently as ever.

"From now on the Port Chaplain will take care of you. Go and see him at once."

Another Southern Baptist with the same look in his eye as Holt, and a bigger spoofer than the T.O.: in fact, we became convinced that the two were working in perfect harmony to give us the run-around until our ship was all set to sail.

The first thing he said to us was, "Have yo'-all got yo' ovahco'ts?"

"Listen, Chaplain," said Miner. "We're going to India, where, according to the 'Encyclopædia Britannica,' the temperature never falls below a hundred in the shade. So we don't need overcoats!"

"But yo'-all might be stationed in the Himalayas. Yo'-all go draw yo' ovahco'ts. Come back heah aftuh."

That took us another day. And so it went on, day after day; something new had to be drawn until we were replete with sun glasses, overcoats, mosquito nets, gloves, winter underwear, winter shirts and pants, heavy rubber boots, field jackets, G.I. shoes, communion sets, communion wine, hundreds of Testaments, portable phonographs and used records, raincoats, typewriters, boxes of stationery and office supplies, stacks of game boards, a large box of hymnbooks, and hundreds upon hundreds of old copies of *Readers' Digest* and other magazines. The crating of all this stuff took days and days, and when the ship was finally ready to sail we nearly had to miss it because we weren't ready; and did that T.O. burn our ears! Anyway, we had been at Charleston from August 2 until August 28. And we just made it!

In our minds we had convinced ourselves that we were to sail on a fast troop transport; so when the T.O. took us down to the dock and pointed out the ship to us, we could hardly believe our eyes. It was the dirtiest, oiliest-looking scow we had ever seen, even though it was supposed to be a brand-new Liberty ship.

"Is that tub *it*?" Faustner asked in dismay. "A first-class sub target, if you ask me!"

The steamship really was brand-new and had a displacement of about ten thousand tons. We clambered up the gang-plank, placed our baggage in our rooms, and came out to

look her over. The deck was littered with cargo; airplane crates and trucks and jeeps took up every available foot of room, and the whole scene made one think that an oil gusher had just been brought in on the after deck—never in my life had I seen so much oil outside of barrels. And then it came to us: the one single solitary thing which had not been issued to us was a pair of overalls, or fatigues!

With the exception of the Skipper, the crew of the ship was made up of men who had never been to sea before, or who had retired and reenlisted for the duration. When they learned we were chaplains, they all made a valiant effort to modify their language. We nearly "busted a rib" when the Chief Engineer dropped a wrench on his foot and gave out with, "Oh, deuce, deuce!" The effort was too much for them, though, and after a few days they were back in the groove with the fanciest talk I've ever heard. My father was a sailor; but those boys actually had him faded.

Toward evening five Chinese aviators came aboard and took over what was left of the cabins. Right then we decided that we'd learn Chinese on this trip; and we actually did learn the Chinese for the three square meals a day which we got on board. That night the red flag, which had been flying all the time the ship was in dock, was hauled down, and slowly we pulled out into the river.

The next morning we left Charleston in a convoy protected by a sub chaser and a patrol boat, bound for Key West where we were supposed to get into a larger convoy. At midmorning the Naval officer in charge of the gun crews called us all together and assigned us posts as lookouts, adding that, if we were wise, we'd sleep in our clothes and never get too far away from our life belts.

At seven knots an hour it took us until September 1 to reach Key West. On the way down we passed several sunken

ships whose masts stood up out of the water like black spires. It seems as if we nearly joined them, too, just below Miami. Suddenly the sub chaser dashed out and started dropping depth charges. All stations were manned immediately, but nothing happened. We felt quite secure, however, since we were only about a mile offshore—within easy swimming distance.

We had our first taste of real excitement the day we pulled out of Key West. We were in the center of a convoy making about eight knots an hour. I was lookout on the starboard upper deck. It was about eleven-thirty, and I was thinking of going down for lunch, when up popped a periscope about a mile away, three points off the starboard bows. I gave the alarm at once and waited for the guns to start blasting. Beyond a lot of confused shouting, nothing happened, and in a fraction of a minute the periscope slid beneath the waves. The patrol boats rushed over to the spot and hung about for a while without dropping any depth charges.

Everybody was nervous now. The gunners, just kids who had volunteered for this kind of work, were quarreling among themselves over their failure to start blasting at the sub. Eventually they concluded that they had been right in not shooting without a direct order from their officer.

"Ye gods!" Faustner blurted out. "Shoot the darned thing; don't wait for orders or we'll all be in the soup!"

Forty-five minutes later the periscope appeared again right in the midst of the convoy and about a hundred yards from our port side. One of the Chinese boys spotted it first, and immediately set up a cry that would have frightened Confucius. The second mate had his glasses on it in a jiffy and yelled to the gunners to shoot. But again there was the same indecision and confusion; so we stood by to await the crash of explosion which fortunately never came. We wrote the



guns and gun crews off as being merely decorative after that. Eglov, the Naval officer, was furious.

"Orders, —!" he roared. "Fire at the — thing; get your orders after!"

Faustner came up to me looking as serious as a forest fire.

"I give up!" he said. "From now on I'm relying on my life belt. I've packed me a little bag with what I need in case I have to go over the side."

Miner and I roared with laughter and went with him to see his little bag. It was packed so tightly, it felt like an anvil.

"Better tie a life belt around the little bag," suggested Miner. We poked all manner of fun at Faustner for his evident worry about having to go over the side, but a few minutes later I sneaked off and packed a little bag for myself. And so did Miner, as I learned later.

At dawn on September 8, we pulled into the magnificent harbor of Guantánamo Bay, with its anchorage for the entire fleet. We paused 'only long enough to get new orders, though, and off we went again, bound for Trinidad and the broad Atlantic. Six hours out of Guantánamo we got a radio message to put about at once and return to the bay. We didn't know what was up; but the ship streaked back full steam ahead and was actually making twelve knots by the time we reached the bay. All we could gather was that we had been heading right into a submarine pack that was playing havoc with shipping in the Caribbean Sea. On the way back Mr. Swanson, the Chief Engineer, was extremely nervous. Foolishly, I started to kid him about it.

"Listen, preacher," he said, "I've had one tour of duty scrambling on a hatch cover trying to keep away from the — sharks, and I don't want another. One torpedoing is plenty."

We stayed at Guantánamo Bay four days awaiting a new

convoy, new escort vessels, and a new route. There was nothing to do but kill time.

Given this opportunity, the crew did not neglect the delights of Cuba. On the way down from Key West they had talked glowingly of a brand of Dragon Dew to be had in Cuba which was called Bacardi. The boys took up a liberal collection to lay in a stock of this delectable moisture. With a serious face I suggested that it would be a fine thing to give this money to the local missionary society to buy wheelbarrows for the natives who had to carry their coconuts on their backs through the jungles. They didn't know what to do with the suggestion for a moment; finally Pete, the chief cook and a Spaniard, said, "Jees Chris', Jees Chris', Jees! Hell with da mishronies!"

Anyway, when we got ashore, we lost the crew boys and didn't see them again until we caught the small boat that was to take us back to the ship which was anchored in the Bay. It was plain that they had more than sampled the Bacardi, and what amused us was the quantity they had brought along for future reference. They had four one-gallon flasks of the stuff, each flask encased in a nice basketwork wicker casing. When the motor boat pulled up to the quay, one of the men flung the four flasks into the bottom of the boat, and off we went.

In a few minutes we were alongside the ship. We scrambled up the rope ladder and climbed aboard. One man was left behind to tie the flasks to a rope for hauling aboard by the men at the rail. The rope was thrown over; then a dead silence fell over the crew. I looked over the rail of the boat, and the man down there was staring stupidly at the flask he held in his hand. It was as light as a feather. He dropped it and grabbed wildly at another. The same thing. It was the same with all four of them. The men at the rail had no need

to ask what was wrong; dropping the flasks into the boat had cracked every one of them, and the precious cargo had trickled out all over the bottom of the boat.

We chaplains moved hurriedly away from the rail; for if previous experience meant anything, the air was soon to be rent with blasphemies of a particularly fancy variety.

On Sunday September 13, led by a sleek new destroyer, our convoy headed out for the Panama Canal—bound, so we believed, for Australia. The heat during the next few days was a fright; all of us were soon burnt raw from the reflection of the sun on the water which we had to face in order to discharge our duties as lookouts. We were making nine knots, now, not a very fast pace, but still too fast for one of the ships in the convoy, and she began to drop farther and farther back, an easy target for any marauding sub. By morning she was out of sight entirely; a rather stupid thing, it seemed to me, to risk the loss of a ship to gain one knot an hour when our speed was so low as it was. Even at our best speed of twelve knots any sub could outrun us, so why worry about eight or nine knots? The argument of the convoy commander, who had selected our ship as the one from which to direct operations, was that the skipper of the slow ship was at fault by saying that he could make nine knots. We never saw that ship again.

Then the crew, seeking some relief for the loss of the Bacardi, began to teach the Chinese boys how to play poker. At first the little fools won a few dollars, and they were jubilant. Faustner finally took them aside and tried to tip them off. They smiled kindly and thanked him. "No wully. Chinese boy velly cards player good."

And Cheng, the best of them, spoke up with, "Others lose money. I win it back."

He did win about eighty dollars the first few days. We

knew the end was near, though, when we heard that they were peddling their shaving kits, revolvers, pocketknives, and suitcases. They were dogged to the very last, though.

Then someone discovered that the cards had been marked; whereupon I composed a little jingle for the Chinese boys to write in their diaries:

The Chinese boys got sadly roped  
At playing stud, but still they hoped,  
Until they learned that the cards were doped  
Among the waves so green-o.

They landed in India penniless.

By the time we reached the Panama Canal we had cleaned most of the oil off the ship with our clothes. At Colón we took on another lot. Too much, it seems, for it ran over the vents and rolled down onto every deck, and we had the job of cleaning it all off again.

We ran up the red flag as we entered the harbor. We had run up this red flag at every port we touched, but it never occurred to us to ask the meaning of it until we reached Colón.

"What does that red flag mean?" asked Miner of the first mate as we were leaning against the rail.

"Ammunition ship, o' course!"

"What!" yelled Faustner in alarm. "You mean this is an ammunition ship? — — —! How did they come to put us on this floating coffin?"

"Nothing to worry about," soothed the mate. "We'll blow any torpedo that comes our way to hell and gone!"

He was as serious as a clown. Faustner looked at him queerly and went down to repack his little bag. If he only had a bottle of Holy Water, he said, he could stand by to

swish it on any torpedo that was headed our way. There was no longer any other hope.

From Charleston we had come over two thousand miles. We still had fourteen thousand to go, and from now on we were to travel without an escort of any kind. We nosed out of the Canal and headed due south; so we guessed we were going back into the Atlantic, either around the Horn or through the Strait of Magellan. One consolation, anyway: there were no subs on the west coast of South America; so we could sleep peacefully at night and even take our clothes off.

Below the equator the air turned quite cold, and we dug out our winter clothing. The dreariness of the weather and the monotony of the voyage were relieved, however, by one of Nature's grandest sights. On the morning of September 28 a magnificent albatross came gliding over us. Why this lovely creature confines itself to these lonely waters is a puzzle to me. This one came over at about a hundred feet, its wings spread out about ten or twelve feet. I watched it for about an hour and in all that time it did not flap those tremendous wings more than a half-dozen times. As a glider it rivals the vulture, but when it pitches on the water it looks ungainly; it must fold those huge wings before it can settle comfortably. It is rather shy, too; so much so that Count Felix Luckner's story of saving his life by clinging to the feet of an albatross is probably Teutonic eyewash. It can't be done.

In all, we encountered four species of albatross, three white and one black. None of these species is very numerous; a dying race, the sailors say. The black albatross has a wing spread of from four to six feet, in contrast to the great albatross, whose wings spread out to ten or twelve feet. The crew members had many a tall tale to tell about the albatross—most of them apocryphal, no doubt.

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On October 3 the temperature was down to forty degrees. That morning we awakened to find ourselves in a terrific gale and a heavy sea which was running with us. The action of the water now was so fascinating that Faustner and I decided to watch it from the stern of the ship—a bit of indiscretion which nearly ended our careers as chaplains. The ship heaved and tossed like a cork, and we remarked how impossible it would be for a small boat to live among those waves or to attempt to rescue anyone who might be washed overboard. Barely had we made the observation when we were swept off our feet by a wave which broke four feet over the stern. We were knocked about like corks before we finally managed to grab the rail and hang on until the water subsided. Getting back to safety was quite a task, for by this time mountains of water were sweeping the decks. When finally we did reach safety, we were half frozen from the icy water.

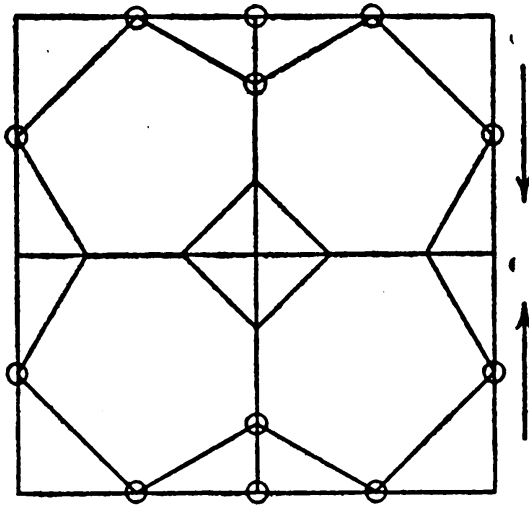
“Even had the seas been calm,” explained the Skipper, “we could not have picked you up if you had gone over. My orders are definite: I am to stop for nothing. A man overboard is a man lost.”

The weather kept us indoors pretty much now. Some of the time we passed with the Chinese boys playing their innumerable games, which involved as equipment nothing more than a few buttons, or one's fingers, or a box of matches. A kind of checkers gave us a lot of fun because, try as we might, we could never beat the Chinese at it. The game is played by two people, each having six counters to start with and arranged as in the accompanying diagram. The object of the game is to encircle one of your opponent's men and then remove it from the board. The counters move along any of the lines.

While playing these games we turned up what the psychologists call an “Idiot Savant.” One of the table boys was

a Cuban. It was obvious to everyone that Alberto was a moron, and not a very high-grade one at that. He used to come into the saloon at night and watch us play. In a very short time I had trimmed everybody but the Chinese at checkers, and I came to be considered pretty good.

One evening Alberto shyly came up to me and said, "You play me checkers, no?"



"You don't want to play him, Alberto," said Faustner. "He's too good for us, let alone you. Ask somebody else."

"I play him," Alberto insisted.

"O.K., Alberto," I said. "Let's have a couple of games." And I winked at the others.

In a few quick moves I had cleared most of Alberto's men off the board, and everybody began to laugh. Then it was Alberto's move. He had only one king to my five, but he picked up that king and went bing! bang! bing! bang! all over the board and cleaned me off. All of us were stupefied, and we made him put them all back on the assumption that he didn't know what he was doing. But he knew, all right. No one ever beat Alberto at checkers. I contend he's one of

the world's best players. Despite the fact that he was obviously feeble-minded in other things, he could tell you exactly how many moves it would take for him to beat you after he saw your first move. Finally he was handicapping himself with one-half as many men as his opponent.

We entered the Strait of Magellan at five o'clock on the morning of October 3, 1942, having covered about four thousand miles from Panama. The scenery in the strait is much like that of Switzerland: bleak, barren, snowy peaks, with numerous glaciers lining the high valleys.

Sailing through the strait at night is a dangerous business, yet we had to do it to get past Punta Arenas, Chile, the southernmost city in the world, without being detected. Our ship was the first to use this new route to India since the outbreak of the war, and we didn't want the Germans to know about it. Punta Arenas has a German population of about two thousand balanced by an equal number of Czechs who are waiting for an opportunity to slit the throats of the Heinies. We sneaked past Punta Arenas in the inky blackness and came to anchor for the night some thirty miles east. In the early dawn we weighed anchor and made for the South Atlantic.

We were nearly a day's sailing out of the strait when Faustner remarked, "The Third Mate is pretty sick; I told him to go to bed and put a hot-water bottle on it."

"On what?" I asked casually.

"On his belly. He had a terrible pain in his right side. Something he ate, I guess."

I rushed to the Third Mate's cabin, and sure enough, there he was with a hot-water bottle on his side, moaning in agony. The next minute he was insane with pain, and it took four of us to hold him in bed. I slung out the hot-water bottle and sent Miner to the galley for a big chunk of ice; meanwhile I injected a little opium. It took two hours for the opium and



the ice to take effect. We had to fight that madman all that time. Finally he lapsed into a deep sleep.

The Skipper had already put the boat about and headed back for Punta Arenas, since we lacked facilities and trained personnel to deal with acute appendicitis. We steamed into Punta Arenas in broad daylight and stayed until the next morning. That little incident, we think, nearly cost us the ship a little later on.

Just east of the strait we came to a stop again. Something had gone wrong with the main pump. It took the engineers eight hours to locate the trouble. It was clearly a case of sabotage: a small crowbar had been placed in the pump and had broken into three pieces. Eight hours later we were stopped again, a perfect target for subs. This time it was a broken oil line on the crankshaft. Faustner had become philosophic about the whole thing; as far as he was concerned, it was only a matter of time until a sub caught up with us during one of these frequent enforced stops; so he went to check his little bag once more.

None of us had been homesick or lonely until now, and here it seemed to hit us all at the same time. When I left Camp Wolters, Texas, Irm had given me a letter which I was to open when I felt particularly lonely; so I opened the letter. It was a simple little thing, but it bucked me up no end at that moment. There was a little snapshot I had taken of her when I first met her, and a cheerful note telling me that everything would be O.K. Dear old Irm! I thrilled with pride that I had gotten her to marry me.

By the middle of October we had come within a couple of hundred miles of Cape Town, South Africa, making good time all the way. Then, on Sunday morning October 18, we got a radio message to turn around and head back south. Evidently things were getting hot around Cape Town. We

had run back south for about eight hours when we picked up a radio message from our sister ship, which was never more than a day's sailing from us. Somehow, she had failed to get the message to turn back south; consequently she had run right into this submarine field. Her message told us that she was being attacked by a submarine. One torpedo had seemed to come from a decoy lifeboat. The ship was "zigging and zagging" all over the ocean in an effort to get clear. She sailed for miles through a graveyard of ships, with bodies and wreckage strewn all around. Late in the afternoon she was attacked again, and again she got away. Twenty-four ships were reported lost within a week in that spot.

We were zigzagging now, too. That night the lookout reported a strange ship about three miles away to starboard. The Skipper and the Naval officer identified it as a British armed merchant cruiser. She followed us all night; and happy in the thought of protection, we slept peacefully all night—safe in the arms of the British Navy. In the early morning we lost the strange ship in the mists, and we never saw her again. It was too good to be true, we said.

Everybody was tense now. The submarine activity off Cape Town had been terrific, and we began to feel that perhaps we should be next. If only we could get through the next two days, we should be reasonably safe. It was with a sigh of relief, indeed, that we finally were picked up by a British cruiser and escorted into Cape Town.

Immediately upon landing the Skipper reported the British armed cruiser which had escorted us all through one night.

"British armed cruiser, nothing!" snorted the Naval attaché. "That was a Jap armed cruiser with five twelve-inch guns in her belly. You guys were just lucky, that's all. I don't know what saved you unless it was the silhouette caused by your airplane crates on deck."

And he was right. A British cruiser was dispatched south at once. On November 11 we got the news that the Jap had been brought to action about four hundred miles south of Cape Town and sunk. And that night I had slept without my life belt! A few days later we got additional information on the Jap. She was a floating fortress, according to our Naval Intelligence. In addition to her heavy guns, her sides were lined with torpedo tubes and anti-aircraft guns. Evidently she was on her way to wait for the ships coming out of the Strait of Magellan, intelligence of which she had doubtless received from the Germans at Punta Arenas.

Cape Town was a sight to behold. The harbor is nothing to write home about, but the town itself, at the very foot of Table Mountain, which rises sheer for thirty-five hundred feet, is really a grand spot. We lost no time in going ashore to look the place over.

On the way to town from the docks I paused to look at a French cruiser which was in for repair. The others went on without me. But it was my lucky day. As I started to mend my pace to catch up with the others, a Nash coupé drew up, and a cheery voice asked me if I wanted a lift. I was in God's pocket that day; the driver happened to be a Dr. Sion, the Port physician. He not only gave me a lift; he took me home for supper and put me up for the night, which was really a windfall inasmuch as not a hotel in town had a room to spare.

Faustner had managed to chisel a bed from the Bishop of Cape Town, a breezy old Dutchman who was patently shocked to hear that not all American Army chaplains were Irish priests. He was a jovial old boy, though, and took this disconcerting bit of news in his stride. "Ach," he said to Miner and me, "gum inzite und zee mine ovis; schtinkvoot iss vot it iss."

And stinkwood it was. Lovely stuff to line walls with. The

stinkwood tree takes six hundred years to mature, I understand; so naturally it's as expensive as it is beautiful.

There is no finer marine view in the world than that from the top of Table Mountain, Cape Town. From the summit one can see both the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean. It is reached by a cable car which can be operated only when there are no wind and no clouds. It is quite a hazardous trip at the best of times; so much so, in fact, that the proprietor of the little shop at the top is convinced that each trip will be the last. Accordingly he charges each customer the full cost of his investment. Basking in the sun outside the tea shop was the biggest and fattest cat I've ever seen in my life. Miner claimed it was the proprietor's alter ego. I caught myself wishing that my wife's wire-haired terrier, Taffums Waffums, were there to run a little of that fat off that cat. The only thing was, the cat looked as if it lived on dogs.

The last leg of the voyage was now before us. On October 26, 1942, we left Cape Town for Karachi, India. We got safely by Madagascar, where the British and French were still fighting, and began to feel secure. Then the lookouts reported a periscope, and we immediately went into a wild zigzag and called boat, fire, and gun drill; for we believed we hadn't long to wait. The night passed without incident, however, and once again we settled down to peace and quiet, convinced that the periscope had been a shark's fin.

With security firmly fixed in everyone's mind we had our last scare on the night of November 8. At two o'clock in the morning a torpedo missed our bows by a hair's breadth, and off we went again into a zigzag dash all over the ocean. We never knew how many torpedoes were fired, nor did we see the sub. But, just four days from our destination, it was the last straw.

On November 12, with Karachi almost in sight, we sat

down to the Captain's dinner. And what a feast that was! The ship docked at Karachi at four in the afternoon of November 13, having traveled more than sixteen thousand miles, thirteen thousand of them without escort of any kind. The voyage had taken seventy-three days, twenty-two hours, and three minutes. The running time was sixty-two days, eighteen hours. Up went the red flag once more. Faustner looked at it and shook his fist.

"Just think of putting three chaplains on an ammunition ship!" he scoffed.

"Maybe there's method in their madness!" clichéd the Skipper.

## KARACHI

NO SOONER did the ship touch the dock than hordes of barefooted natives streamed aboard armed with gunny sacks and started to clean out the tin cans, garbage, and everything else that wasn't nailed down. I, personally, went and checked the shackles on the anchors, for there was no stopping this tribe which was like grasshoppers for multitude. We hastened to lock our cabins, too, and I got to mine just in time; four innocent-looking rascals were already at work on it on the pretext that they had been hired to clean the ship. They were picking it clean, all right.

We got back on deck to find the ship well on the way to being unloaded. It was a chastening sight. The deck cargo, which had taken our boys in Charleston two whole days to load, was almost all off. These little brown men had done it all in a matter of hours and without any of the sweat and toil and cussing which had marked its loading. For once we had nothing to say about American speed and efficiency.

Karachi was what we expected it to be: hot and yellow-brown. The architecture of the city proper was quite modern, a striking contrast to the trains of camel carts which rumbled on rubber tires through the streets from morning until night. Never have I seen so many beggars in one place. They were everywhere. My explanation is that the beggar hordes of India, upon hearing that Karachi was to be an important American base in India, came flocking to the place for the liberal baksheesh which we are reputed to hand out to all and sundry. Our first sight of this nature was the human

crab: a figure twisted into something which resembled nothing human, and which crawled sideways along the ground, squeaking, "Baksheesh, sahib, baksheesh!"

The crowning sight in my estimation, though, was an able-bodied man with a harness and sack around his neck from which protruded a head and two feet. Whenever he spotted Americans, he ran with amazing speed and thrust this monstrosity at them yelling, "Baksheesh, sahib, baksheesh!"

We heard later that cripples could be rented by the day on a percentage basis by anybody who had a mind to turn an honest penny at the begging racket. The British we met swore that most of the subhuman wretches were deliberately crippled and distorted from childhood in order to improve their sympathy appeal and thus bring more baksheesh to parents or guardians. It is quite possible; for it is hardly probable that a normal population would produce such a disproportion of defectives. Progress in the streets of Karachi became a continual fight through these hordes of beggars, who clung to our clothing like leeches. Soon many of our boys began to adopt the British habit of carrying a swagger stick to beat them off. And why not! These people are alive with sores and vermin.

We stayed at the air base about three days, enjoying the glorious Karachi winter (superior even to California's), and then we said our goodbyes. Faustner was assigned to Agra, and we all envied him—until we had a chance to visit the place. Holt drew a service group stationed at Ondal in western Bengal. Miner stayed at the air base as chaplain to a fighter group. I drew what later proved to be the prize assignment of the lot: I was turned over to a medium bombardment group which was scheduled to move up shortly to a field within bombing range of the Japs. I got to see the boys once or twice again after that. I met Faustner at Agra as we went

through on our way up. He was very unhappy about the place, and I had to stamp his ticket twice before I could get away from him. Holt and I got together every once in a while; and, as far as I know, he is still sweating in Bengal. Miner and I met in China a year and a half later. From what I gathered, he was the most popular chaplain in the outfit, too.

The medium bombardment group to which I was assigned had a six-weeks training program to complete at Karachi before moving up; so I set about adjusting myself to Karachi and to my outfit. I soon discovered that my men were, on the whole, a pretty tough bunch of hombres. Shorty Manch, Wildner, Blanton, Knobloch, and McElroy had come out of the Tokyo Raid, and many of the others had walked out of China or Burma. In all, they justified the legend which most of them had tacked up in their quarters:

Through these portals  
Have stooped to go  
The best damn pilots  
You ever could know.

On my rounds of the post I looked over the names which the boys had assigned to their quarters, and I said, "H'm!" Over there was "Withering Sights" where the redoubtable Jimmy Philpott led his indomitable band into all kinds of horseplay and general hell raising. And farther on down was another den of shennannigans and carnage which went under the proud title (in large red letters) of "Redass Social and Athletic Club." There was plenty of "social" about that gang, I recall, but little that could be classed as "athletic," unless "sacking" comes under that heading. Well, I consider myself a bit of a realist; so I began to consider the probability that, if I wanted to get religion over to these boys, it would have to come in V.O. wrappers before they'd even glance at it.



Our Commanding Officer was Lieutenant Colonel T. G. Wold, a West Point man and an understanding old boy. He will be remembered, I think, as the man who did more than anybody else to inject a "home-go" policy into the C.B.I. (China, Burma, India) Theater. Colonel Wold called me in the second day I was there and told me what he thought about my job.

"When we move up," he said, "there won't be any town like Karachi for the men to go to and let down their hair; so you'll have your hands full. In the meantime, let's see what you can do with this dance that the enlisted men are trying to put on. Lieutenant Adams, the Special Service Officer, will help you, and so will Greenwald and Peeler. Only watch Greenwald and Peeler. But they do know some people in the town, and they might be able to give you some leads on women."

I saluted and retired. I found Kay Adams "collecting the rent," as he described his flurries in poker, and before I could state my mission he offered to teach me the game. I declined his kindness, not wishing to impose upon him thus early in our acquaintanceship. It was a wise decision, as I learned later. Kay had a mortgage on almost everybody on the post.

Kay Adams was a quiet westerner, a broncho buster, cattleman, and golddigger. At present he was traveling under the sobriquet of "Slick," which might have been a tribute to his poker hands.

"About this dance, Kay," I began.

"Women," interrupted Kay.

"What about women?" I asked, puzzled.

"That's it: there are none about. And you never heard of a dance without women, have you, Chaplain?"

"No, but—"

"Well, that's the deal; no women."

"Have you tried all the places?"

"Listen, Tom, me, and Bob Low know all the places, and we've tried 'em. These Indian people are funny," he continued. "They don't permit their girls to go out dancing like we do. And the number of European families is very small."

The Colonel had told me to help put on a dance; so, if I failed, it wasn't going to be for lack of trying. I went back to the Colonel and asked him how much leeway I had.

"All you want, Chaplain," he answered. "Go as far as you like, but be sure you help put on a dance that's worth calling a dance."

I had three weeks to help get that dance organized. With Greenwald as guide I scoured Karachi for institutions, shops, factories, churches, and even private homes where the female of the species *Homo sapiens* would be likely to hide out. And I found plenty, too. There were the Lady Dufferin Hospital, the British General Hospital, the Civil Hospital, the Y.W.C.A., and all the big offices. Greenwald made no effort to conceal his admiration for my energy in this matter, but he remained aloof to my general calling. To him, a chaplain is just another nuisance to have around the place. He was somewhat softened in his attitude the day we called on Mrs. Pettingale.

Mrs. Pettingale was a grand old lady about sixty years of age; a pukka memsahib (genuine lady, or mistress) if there ever was one. Tall, dignified, and as gracious as a Virginian, she ruled whatever group she found herself in. And could she talk! I don't mean chatter, but talk—real sense, with a beautiful voice.

"My, but the American soldiers are a fine group of men!" she said with genuine admiration. "I never see them on the street but I want to be young again."

She was so darned frank about it that Greenwald and I had to laugh.

"Poor old Tommy Atkins is quite in the shade beside your men, really," she continued. "And such huge men! How on earth do you breed them like that?"

"We avoid tea and marmalade and margarine, ma'am," answered Greenwald, trying to get in a dig. Poor old Greenwald! I should have abandoned him to the old lady just for his nerve.

"Quite a voider, isn't he?" she turned to me with a twinkle in her eye, while Greenwald squirmed. "But now tell me, why do you Americans make such atrocious films? They're so stupid, actually."

"Because we have to cater to the English market and compete with the Gaumont-British," I answered promptly.

"Oh, now, now! But I asked for it, didn't I? Capital! Capital!"

Greenwald was all smiles now as we sat down to the nicest afternoon tea I've ever had away from home. By the end of an hour Greenwald was willing to be old lady Pettingale's slave. "If that old gal was younger," he said as we drove off, "me and her would be great pals."

When we got back to camp Greenwald spread the story of my sharp comebacks, and my stock went up. Even Peeler came to look at me; but he left, unimpressed.

The second week before the dance we visited all the "girl" places again and renewed our acquaintance, discreetly leaving packages of American cigarettes around before we left. This time I learned that Mrs. James, the Matron at the Lady Dufferin Hospital, had tickets to sell for a benefit for the hospital.

"Give me them tickets, ma'am," said Greenwald.

"That's grand! How many do you want?"

"How many? Why, all of 'em, o' course. Our boys'll be glad to come to the show."

We took all she had left and sold every one of them; but I doubt if any of our boys ever saw the show.

Then it was the Matron at the Civil Hospital. She solicited our aid to get the Negro Quartermaster Band for a concert. We took care of that, too. By the third week these folk were ripe for a little suggestion. I told them about our dance and put it on a prestige basis. I asked Mrs. James if she would assist the other Matrons in chaperoning our dance. I asked all the others the same thing. We agreed to send staff cars after them, and of course they all brought their nurses with them. It was noised around that this event was to be the swell affair of the season, and by gosh, it was! No finer dance had ever been given at Karachi, according to Mrs. Pettingale, and I doubt if anything as good has been put on since.

The Red Cross people did a fine job of preparing the hall for us and getting the refreshments ready. Miss Lynch and her staff spared no efforts to make our dance a success; there wasn't a detail that they hadn't foreseen and arranged for.

The dance went off like a dream. The Colonel, who was the only officer present besides Kay and myself, was amazed that we had turned up so many really pretty girls. The surprise was that we had more girls than men who could dance. There were dusky nurses in spotless white uniforms, Indian W.A.A.C.'s in stiff starched khaki, civilian girls in gorgeous saris, and European girls and Anglo-Indian girls in formal attire.

Permit liquor at a dance, and nine times out of ten you'll have trouble. Before the festivities began, I called the men together and explained how the Indian folk feel about liquor, and I put it up to them. They agreed that there would be no liquor; and I must say those men performed prodigies of

restraint that night. Only one case came to my attention: an old sergeant, a confirmed rum-pot, pretended to have found a lady's handkerchief on the floor. Of course, it was the end of the sari of one of the Indian chaperons. He nearly had her undressed before we could grab him and give him the old heave-ho. We had to give it to him twice more after that before it became permanent. The last time, Greenwald took him out and "put him to sleep" in a carry-all.

Bob Pierce had a few dances with a stunning girl of about twenty-four summers (and goodness knows how many winters), and he wound up by taking her home. It turned out that she was the wife of a very fierce-looking Sikh with a twelve-inch beard and a fourteen-inch dagger. Bob was most eager for the outfit to move up after that. He told me he wanted to go back home in one piece.

Toward the end of December, one of our squadrons was ordered to move up and start working over the Japs in Burma. The C.O. of the outfit came to me and asked about reading material to take along with them. I promised him I'd have a library of a hundred and fifty novels ready by noon the next day. That's how I made my first contact with the Service of Supply overseas. It wasn't a very fortunate one, either.

I learned about these books the S.O.S. had in their warehouse while I was down there trying to trace my crates of chaplain's equipment. They were mostly secondhand books given to the Army by the people back home for general distribution to the men of the armed forces. I had no doubt that I could get a small library for this outfit which was moving up within the next day or so. That is, I had no doubt until I went to the S.O.S. to get the stuff. They listened to my request politely enough, and blandly told me that I'd have to fill out a requisition for them.

"O.K.," I said. "Let me have some of those forms and I'll fix it up for you right away."

"But the requisition will first have to go to the S.O.S. at New Delhi for an O.K."

"And how long will that take?" I asked.

"It has been taking six weeks. We don't know."

"But these men are leaving shortly!" I expostulated. "Can't you let me have the books and fix it up some way?"

It was no use. I begged, cajoled, and even threatened. No books. Then I remembered Mike Malkin of the Red Cross. I hurried over and found Mike in his office. I told him my tale, and he shook his head helplessly.

"Sure, they're for the men—if you can ever pry them loose from the S.O.S. But come with me, Chaplain. I think I have an angle."

In a futile rage I went with Mike to the warehouse. I still didn't know what Mike's angle was, but he emerged followed by three coolies, each with a box of books on his head. Without stopping to ask questions, I heaved the boxes into the carry-all and beat it out of there. It was lunchtime, so perhaps Mike . . . Oh, well, it's water under the wheel, now.

The PX surprised me at Karachi—and still does. The Post Exchange Store is one of the minor delights of an Army post. At the PX one can buy almost anything made in the United States, and buy it cheap, too. When I sailed from Charleston I believed I was leaving the PX behind. Nothing of the kind! The PX flourishes in India. And the stuff they have for sale! Face balm, beer, hair lotion, Kleenex, and a multitude of such valuable and absolutely essential articles.

While the combat crews were rounding off their training at Karachi, the rest of the outfit had little to do. The S-3, or Operations, had nothing to operate; the S-4, or Supply, had few supplies to hoard; the S-2, or Intelligence, had no intelli-

gence. These latter made the best showing at work, though. Our camp was situated astride an old caravan route which had been in use for centuries. Since the camel wallahs saw no reason to change their route, they kept on coming right through the camp. Captain Lewe, our S-2, worked himself into the conviction that the camel train was an espionage device. Thereafter we arrested camels and wallahs, and subjected them to "interrogations."

These interrogations of our S-2 were unique. The wallahs spoke Urdu and no English; S-2 spoke a kind of English but no Urdu. Voluminous notes were taken each time, but on what I can't seem to imagine, since no one understood anyone else. To keep the record straight, though, we threw one camel driver into the cooler every day and impounded the camel. I'd make it a point to ask Captain Lewe why these men were thrown into the guardhouse. The answer was always the same: "His — answers were unsatisfactory."

They make ice cream in Karachi. Almost all of the restaurants sell it. Our boys would flock into town every afternoon to eat it up, and they consumed shiploads of the stuff. It was a common sight in the late afternoon to see a half-dozen "sweat lines" on Elphinstone Street waiting for the ice cream to come out of the freezers. The Chinese restaurateurs were perplexed by our boys: an Englishman would eat a dish of ice cream and have it over with; our boys ordered doublers, one after another, until there was no more. My driver was a typical case. I gave him a ten-rupee note one day and told him to get himself some ice cream, thinking, of course, that he'd give me nine rupees change. When I finally located him, he was in the Manhattan Café with seven rupees' worth of ice cream under his belt, and he was sweating out another issue.

"How about making it a doubler?" I asked sarcastically.

"O.K., sir," he answered promptly, and I'm hanged if he didn't finish up the ten rupees. He drove home with three dollars' worth of my ice cream under his belt, a sizeable dish for any man.

The rivalries between the Limeys and the Yanks used to keep the theater owners in perpetual hot water. At the end of each show they were supposed to play "God Save the King" and "The Star Spangled Banner." If they played "The Star Spangled Banner" first, the Limeys walked out without standing at attention and our boys jumped them; if they played the British anthem first, our boys walked out and the Limeys started a riot—and they surely got service in a great big way. This impasse was finally resolved by having the band play the opening chord of "The Star Spangled Banner" and going immediately into "God Save the King," or by playing the first bar of "God Save the King" and going right into "The Star Spangled Banner." It was a great disappointment to everybody.

One of the greatest annoyances to old Private G. I. after he landed in Karachi was a tenacious form of diarrhea called the Karachi crud; it might have derived from the shiploads of ice cream they ate in the shops. In Delhi it was known as the Delhi belly. It was described to new arrivals in awed tones. The conversation went like this:

"Had the crud yet?"

"No."

"Well, just stick around—you'll get it. And when you do, watch out."

"Yeah? What's it like?"

"You'll know. Rots the heels right out of your socks."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah! And give you pimples on the breath."

"Yeah?"



"Yeah!"

Karachi was a Mecca for curio hunters. Things were cheaper there than anywhere else in India, I think. And the selection was greater, too. As in every other eastern market, the customer dickers for everything he buys. The wallah starts with a price which sounds like a down payment on the Taj Mahal; the customer counters with a trifle which would be an insult to a beggar. Gradually, the breach is closed and the sale is made. I worked out a fool-proof technique for handling the shop wallahs. I'd spot what I wanted, admire it for about ten minutes, and then ask the price.

"Hundred rupees," would be the prompt reply.

"My, oh, my! Why do you sell this lovely thing so cheaply?" I'd ask.

"It is old stock, and we like our American friends," he'd say. And then he would really go into action. "Today if I buy this again, sahib, I pay three-four times that much. Is very hard to get now."

"Must be," I'd say. "My, but it's lovely! If I were you I certainly wouldn't sell it for less than a hundred and fifty rupees at least."

"It is the war. It is hard times for us. The prices they are gone up. We are willing to sacrifice for our American friends. Shall I wrap it up for you, sahib?"

"Oh, no! It's lovely and ridiculously cheap, but I really can't afford to buy it, and I wouldn't want you to cut your price."

Then I'd start for the door, slowly.

"Wait, master! You are a gentleman, surr: for you we will do the favor. What can you pay?"

"I'm ashamed to tell you."

"Say it, master, and give us a chance."

"Twenty rupees."

"Twenty rupees! Ha, ha, ha! But, master, be reasonable! Let us make at least one rupee. That is the price I paid for it five years ago wholesale."

"I can well believe it. It's such a lovely thing."

"Make it thirty rupees, sahib, and take it! Go on, take it! We will be the losers."

"No, don't cut your price on a lovely article like that. You must get fifty for it at least. If I had fifty I would gladly pay it; but I have only twenty. Maybe some other day—"

And again I would be on my way to the door.

"Wait, master! All right, take it! Take it! But the other dealers must not know of this, or they will put us out of business."

And I took it. Loads of it. My wife says we need another room in the house for all the things I sent home, for which I paid rock-bottom prices. The chaps in the outfit thought I was insane to buy merchandise in Karachi.

"Wait until you get up into the interior—the stuff is dirt-cheap up there," they said.

But I had traveled in the East before and knew the stuff was always to be found at the ports where the tourists come. There's nothing in the interior for the simple reason that there is no one there to buy it. This time I was right, too. When we got up into the interior, I never heard such a chorus of "I should 'a' bought" and "I could 'a' bought."

I tasted my first cup of Darjeeling tea in Karachi. I've never been the same man since. I sent some home to my wife and to my mother at once, and they have never been the same since. In all, I must have sent home a hundred pounds of this heavenly brew. After the war I think I'll go into the business of importing it, for which, I'm sure, a grateful nation will want to build me a monument. Darjeeling tea has to be tasted

to be appreciated. I persuaded Greenwald to drink some one day and he burst out with:

"Why, the — stuff's good!"

"Sure, it's good, you dope!" I said. "What did you think it would be? Vinegar?"

"No. Medicine."

And Greenwald has never been the same since. He hates to tell the other chaps he's a convert from coffee. He can't stand coffee any more.

Darjeeling tea is like that. One sip, and you're through with the common garden variety of beverages.

The morale of the whole outfit jumped when we finally received orders to move. For most of us, it meant a new environment with new experiences and new things to see; for others, it meant an escape from what has euphemistically been called "military courtesy," and which many of the boys were coming to detest. Thank goodness, we left that behind, 100 per cent, and started getting the real job done, 100 per cent. In place of military courtesy we developed a genuine respect which varied somewhat, to be sure, with the adjudged quality of the officer evoking it. New officers joining our outfit from the States would try to revive the old business of "popping to"; but it was a futile effort, for the men just smiled and went about their business as usual.

And what a job our boys did! Just check the records, and you'll find out that we flew more missions and dropped more bombs in number and tonnage than any other comparable outfit in the Air Force, if not in the entire world. And our losses were negligible.

## THE TRUCK CONVOY

TOWARD the end of December we were ready to pull out of Karachi. The bulk of the outfit went up by train, but I managed to get assigned to the truck convoy which was to take all our equipment up. To save time we were going to travel by freight train to New Delhi, and drive the trucks through from there to our station, which was in eastern Bihar, via the Grand Trunk Highway. Actually we drove *through* the Grand Trunk.

We loaded our vehicles onto the freight train and were all set to pull out by December 29, 1942. The moving spirit in all this work was a little sergeant from Brooklyn who made it clear that he wanted "Ever't'n done right and not'n' done screwy." Brooklyn was the most likable rascal I've ever come across in the Army. He had a camaraderie which won everybody: officers, men, women, natives, and even the British. He left everyone with the impression that America surrounded Brooklyn on four sides.

The train crawled out of the freight yard at two o'clock in the morning. At five o'clock, old Private G. I. began to holler for his breakfast. Bob Lowe, who was the train commander, tried to ignore this plaintive wail for an hour or two; then he sighed and got up to distribute the rations; but there were no rations to distribute.

"No rations!"

The G.I.'s looked at each other in dismay, arms on hips, and their hunger promptly doubled in intensity. Hardship and suffering suddenly appeared on their faces; they hadn't

eaten for nearly six hours. Then began the usual tracing of the pedigrees of those who were responsible for having forgotten to load the rations. Finally Bob stopped the train at a small station and put through a call to Hyderabad (Sind) to order breakfast for eighty men. Greatly mollified, the men went back to their poker and blackjack, and to tales about what they were going to do when we got up to the jungles where the tigers were. All of them were heartily glad to be putting distance between themselves and Karachi. Newcomer was verbose about it.

"—! Remember what it was like back there when we first hit! All sand and dust and heat. Dust in your chow—dust in your eyes, ears, nose, and throat. Couldn't see a hundred feet some days for dust. Dust and crud. I'll never forget it."

"You said it." Agreement was unanimous.

"There were no mess halls," continued Newcomer, "so all the chow had to be cooked outside in that dust. —! It was half dust when we gets it, and we pick up another cargo of grit while we eat it. And we all slept in that big Zep'lin shed with the hawks and the buzzards roostin' up there in the struts. And, brother, when those babies salvoes a cargo on you, you really got something, an' I ain't kiddin'."

"Sure was a fright, all right."

The boys got back to the hunting up in the interior. It was all Philpott's fault, I think. The Colonel sent him up ahead to look this new field over, and when he came back the boys asked him if there was any hunting up there. He laid it on a bit thick to boost morale, I guess, and he was a kidder to boot, anyway.

"Green hills and trees," said Philpott. "And grass and water. And elephants and tigers and panthers. And bears and jackals and hyenas. And wild cats. Fellows, plenty of good hunting up there."

So now the boys were going on up into the interior not to annoy the Japs; that was a secondary consideration. The big thing was the good hunting.

"An' me without my twelve-gauge an' my coon houn's!" moaned Smoky Rogers.

We had to laugh. Most of the G.I.'s from way down expected to find possum and coon up there where we were going. "Moose and elk," I said with a wink at Bob, "but no possum nor coon."

"'Cause why?" demanded Smoky, who is from Kentucky, a little bit teed off because we all laughed.

"'Cause there ain't no niggers," broke in Greenwald. "No niggers, that's why."

"They ain't!" Smoky was incredulous.

"No, there ain't. Least, not real niggers. And you don't expect to find possum and coon if there ain't no niggers, do you?"

Those southern boys were ready to go home right then and there. Of all the injustice the war had pulled on them, this was the worst.

"What a country!" grumbled Tennessee. "No possum! No coon! No white women! —! And like 's not they got the whole — place posted, too, so we can't go huntin' what they is up there."

"No game wardens up there, Smoky," soothed Greenwald. "I been reading up on India—'Introducin' India' was the book. They ain't got game wardens, but they got another system which ain't so worse."

"How you figure?" The general interest was aroused.

"They got rajahs instead," explained Greenwald.

"What's rajahs?"

"India," explained Peeler with an air of authority, "is divided up into casts of characters or something like that.

One bunch of farmers from one cast get together and hire a rajah to look after things for 'em. All you boys got to do is get in solid with one of these here rajahs, and it's in the bag. You can hunt all you want."

"The —!"

"Sure thing, Bud. The real wogs have one cast," continued Greenwald, "and one rajah. The Muslims have another cast and another rajah, only they call him Naybob; the Musclemen have another, and these here Nomedans have another and so on adam infinitum. An' if you're in good standing in one of these here casts, you're in good standing and nobody can touch you. You're untouchable. Ain't that right, Chaplain?"

"Something like that," I said. "But you sure got a head on you, Greenwald," I concluded.

"Oh, sure! I studied this book I been tellin' these guys about. Peeler's got it now, but you can have it after him. Just tell him I said. It says that when a rajah gets old, he retires and they make him a mah-rajah. I guess that's how Gandhi got his start. Mah-Rajah Gandhi. You heard of him, sir, o' course."

"Who hasn't?" I said. "Little guy with lots of knees and gums."

"Yeah, that's him."

"It's in the bag, then," said Yance. "All we got to do is find us a rajah and baksheesh him up good and plenty. Never see a wog yet which wasn't born to baksheesh."

"It's a tiger skin for me, brother." Newcomer leaned back and stretched.

"Me, too. I wrote and told my wife I was getting one," said Peeler. "And, brother, I got to get it now."

"Hear you guys talk," said Greenwald, "you think tigers run in flocks like sheep."

"Nope! We ain't that dumb, Greeny," said Peeler. "We know they run in pairs, or maybe small bunches."

"It's a rug for mine," said Smoky. "Something to throw over the bed. My dogs get cold nights."

"Tiger wool ain't so warm, they tell me," said Jonesy, who's from Idaho. "The boys ought to cross in some merinos with their stock so's to get some long staple. Then you got something."

The laugh was general, but the gnawing pangs of hunger got the boys onto the chow situation once more. We were taking so long to reach Hyderabad that we were beginning to suggest to one another that we must have rushed passed it. We could have easily enough; the train was doing ten miles an hour. But as if in answer to the general prayer, Hyderabad hove in sight.

Bob split the gang into two groups since the facilities of the station would not permit us all to eat at once. Bob and I placed ourselves in the second shift.

The first shift finally came back to the train looking skin-tight. It was more than evident that they had feasted right royally; they seemed to bulge all over. Bob and I marched with the second shift over to the restaurant, determined to get our money's worth, too. We seated ourselves around the big tables. Finally the manager came over and looked at us in evident puzzlement.

"What is it now, sahibs?" he asked politely.

"Chow! Food! Canna! Eats!" was the insistent chorus.

"But, masters, you have already eaten."

"Oh, this is another lot, Joe," explained Bob affably. "Get your cooks busy out there. Jildi!" (Quickly!)

"But there is no more food!"

"What!" Consternation reigned.

"No, sahibs. No more food is. The other sahibs have eaten



it all that we have made. And what they couldn't eat, they have taken with them. It is no more food in the place. I am sorry."

"Why, the dirty, lousy cutthroats!"

"Silence, men! Back to the train!" Bob ordered. And off they trooped; the strong succoring the weak and exhausted.

I decided to try cheering them up; so assuming a serious air, I said: "Be of good cheer, men. We'll be in New Delhi in three days; then we can eat all we want. There are no more stations between here and New Delhi."

"Then one of these — camels is going the way of all flesh, Chaplain, and you better start prayin' for us," said Brooklyn with emphasis.

And that's the way it was all the way to Delhi. At every station the men wanted to get out and eat, and the ones that got to the restaurants first scoffed all the chow. At Batalpur I got in on the first batch and nearly drew two eggs with toast. I lost out by watching a moving human drama which was going on at the counter, and when I wasn't looking, someone got my eggs and toast. Three British officers had ordered eggs and toast just ahead of us, it seems. Their orders appeared just as our lads drew their emaciated bodies up to the counter. It was another Dunkirk for the British. A huge Texan stepped up and scraped all three orders into his plate with the observation:

"Aigs an' toast! This heah is service. Fellows, Ah got mine!"

The British colored up; then noticed the size of Tex and made a masterly disentangling movement. In all fairness, our boys let them have all the tea they wanted, which is all that worried a Limey, anyway.

The thing that saved Bob and me on that foodless ride to Delhi was a bottle of rum that someone had secreted in my

luggage with the evident intention of embarrassing me. I discovered the rum just as I was looking for four cans of milk I was sure I had packed in my bedding roll. Bob and I had to get along as best we could on rum and milk toddies. It was a terrible privation, but after two toddies we decided to bear it without saying a word—for the cause of Democracy. It was just as well we didn't say a word, either, with Peeler and Greenwald on board. We felt sure, though, that our hardship and sacrifice would bring its own reward.

There must be a law against freight trains traveling at night in India. Every time it got dark we pulled into a siding and stayed there all night. The first night, the men got a big fire going right alongside the tracks. The burning wood smelled exactly like barbecued mutton. Bob and I decided not to go near, lest disciplinary action should have to be taken. But secretly, I knew a few young mutton from the flocks that roamed the fields went down the hatch during those long nights of waiting. I began to understand why, when we reached Delhi, our boys absolutely refused to eat mutton.

New Delhi amazed us. We learned that the place was laid out by Lutyens, the famous city planner, and it really did him credit. We had never seen anything like it—and most of us had seen Washington. Magnificent buildings, boulevards hundreds and hundreds of feet wide, fountains, parkways, gardens, lawns. And the hotels! We gazed in wonder at the Imperial Hotel and wondered if it were really true that the government, our government, paid our men six dollars a day to suffer in that paradise of eight-course dinners, bearers running with tea every hour or so, and drinks galore. It was true; and the discovery that it was true gave our boys bitching material for an entire year.

Old Delhi was off limits; so Bob warned the men not to go there, but he and I went off to look it over. It is the usual

Indian city of filth and smells and bazars with this exception: it has a great and famous mosque. The Great Jamma Mosque is famous because it has the relics of the Prophet. A mullah showed us one of the sandals worn by Mohammed himself. We did not question its evident age, but we did think it thoughtful of the old boy's parents to have saved his childhood footgear so that posterity could use them for relics. And then the crowning moment of the tour through the mosque: we were to be shown a hair from the beard of the Prophet. We entered the darkened chamber with the feeling that something terrible might strike us at any moment. Then we saw the great treasure. Stuck to the underside of a pane of glass, fastened to a box, was what was said to be a hair from the beard of Mohammed. We looked at it in amazement.

"Cream stallion," I said.

"—, no! Palamino!" corrected Bob.

The priest looked at us curiously. "What is this you say, master?"

"That's the hair from the tail of a palamino stallion," Bob told him with conviction.

Personally, I would not be so dogmatic about the breed of the stallion. I would have settled for Al Bourak Al Sheriff, Mohammed's famous stallion. One thing I was sure about: it was a horse hair, or else the Prophet had a tough beard, indeed.

We left the Mosque and ran smack into the boys whom we had warned to keep out of this forbidden city. We felt a bit guilty ourselves, but Bob began on them right away.

"What the — are you—"

"We got lost, Lieutenant, and wandered over here," explained Peeler innocently. "We was worried we was off limits until we see you and the Chaplain."

Bob shook his head hopelessly and turned away.

"Looks to me like Dallas," said Brooklyn, surveying the filth. "Yeah, like Dalles, Oregon," he added hastily as Tex started to move toward him.

The boys stretched their imaginations to the limit to prolong our stay in New Delhi. The trucks had to be greased and serviced. That attended to, some of the freight had to be repacked. That done, certain tires had to be changed. Bob finally laid down the law:

"Those — trucks start rolling tomorrow, or else somebody gets busted down to a *Pee vee tee!*"

With heavy hearts the boys assembled that next morning to start the long drive that was to take us up beyond. The convoy drew up outside the headquarters of the Tenth Air Force prior to starting. There was a sign outside. It read: REAR ECHELON, TENTH U.S. AIR FORCE.

Newcomer went up and changed it with axle grease to FAR-IN-THE-REAR ECHELON: TENTH U.S. AIR FORCE.

Feeling that justice had been done, the boys swung aboard, and we were off.

No one seemed to know how the fight started or who swung first, and no one much cared. It was just another of those G.I. incidents which happen in rapid succession all the time, and which help keep morale up by giving the boys something to talk about, to think about, and to gamble about. Anyway, after the boys were pulled apart, the redoubtable O'Toole looked considerably the worse for wear and much less redoubtable. Brooklyn was a dark horse, all right. There was a lad who knew how, as O'Toole found out to his chagrin.

Of course, I knew how the thing had started; saw it brewing the moment we left New Delhi, in fact. When we pulled out, I was riding the cab of a six-by-six with O'Toole as

driver. Brooklyn was driving the truck just ahead of us. And we kept those positions all the way.

About an hour out of Delhi we took our first break. We hadn't traveled very far as yet, though. As soon as we stopped the trucks, the boys retired to the bushes along the side of the road. It was just chance that O'Toole and Brooklyn were next to each other.

Said O'Toole finally, "You got any paper, Brooklyn?"

"What kinda paper?"

"Toilet paper, of course. What the — do you think?"

"—! You — sissy!" said real slow and dragged out.

And that little incident started the whole chain of events that led to the encounter.

An hour later Hammy gave us the signal for another break. Brooklyn stopped his truck a little too quickly, and O'Toole bumped him slightly. O'Toole was out of the cab like a shot. That O'Toole was from the 90th Squadron and Brooklyn from the 91st didn't help matters, either.

"Where'n the hell did you learn to drive a truck? Or wasn't you checked out yet?"

"Brooklyn! Dat's where. Any complaints?"

"Well, for — sake, take your second lesson sometime!"

Brooklyn scoffed. "So what! So you run into me. So you can't stop the — thing. Get the lead outen your pants! —!"

"You pull that again, and you get some leather in your pants, Bud."

"Oh, yeah! So I'll be waitin'."

The ration call broke up this exchange of pleasantries for the time being, but it was resumed at the next stop. We were on the side of the road heating up some of the "C" rations we had picked up in Delhi. O'Toole was already nibbling the biscuits when Brooklyn came up.

"When are you boys from the 91st comin' over to the

goth to take some driving lessons?" asked O'Toole with an attempt at heavy sarcasm.

"Soon's you git some teachers. —! These biscuits are hard." Brooklyn was nonchalant.

O'Toole was stumped for a moment, and all he could say was, "Well, we got 'em."

"Yeah? So you should'a' had 'em along on dis trip. Or wouldn't youse know when youse see one? Gimme some o' dat stew, Lefty."

"Oh, yeah?"

"Oh, yeah!"

The get-going sign broke it up again; but it was becoming evident to me that the boys were going to be watching for chances to get in verbal licks from now on.

We pulled into Agra in the late afternoon; too late, the boys decided, to go any farther that day. Besides, the trucks needed looking to again. Oh, it would probably take two days to get everything straightened out for the road.

Bob sniffed. "We start tomorrow morning!" he stated.

There was nothing much wrong with the trucks; but I knew the boys wanted to see the Taj and a few other things in Agra, and I knew that, come — or free beer they would get to see it, too. And they did. We didn't pull out of Agra until the following afternoon. Those vehicles had developed all the ills one could think of; but no one seemed to be working on them. Had I not been along on that trip, I think most of the Taj Mahal would have been pried loose for souvenirs.

We lined the convoy up the next day ready to get moving, and again Brooklyn drove his truck perilously close to O'Toole's vehicle while taking his place in the convoy. He had O'Toole scared to death for a moment. Brooklyn looked back and grinned.

"He's a — Brooklyn Indian, I'll bet my life," fumed O'Toole. "These — Kikes sure get in my hair."

"I think he's Polish," I said.

"Same difference. All they got in Poland is Kikes. That's why Hitler went after 'em. Ever see a Polack which wasn't a Kike?" he asked, turning to me. "I came! I saw! I grabbed! That's them in three words."

I changed the subject adroitly. I had plenty of conversation material because it had started to rain. The rain was a relief, though; it laid the dust even if it did make the road a little slippery. As we pulled up in the mud this side of Manipur, O'Toole's truck skidded easily into Brooklyn's. This time it was Brooklyn who had the lead line, and he didn't wait, either.

"So what you do wit' dose teachers youse wuz givin' me back dere? Jee! Git one in dat cab, and let him take over."

"If you didn't stop so — short in this mud, I'd never skidded into you."

"Yeah! So now it's excuses. No excuses in dis man's army, Bud."

After that things went well until we got to a railway crossing where we were held up by an approaching train. By this time O'Toole was beginning to feel that he hadn't broken even in the exchanges; so he was gunning for Brooklyn. It was the little beggar boy's performance that stopped them from becoming open antagonists right then and there. This youngster came up and put on the best show for baksheesh I've ever seen. He turned cart wheels and back flips with the agility of a monkey. He ended his show with a long rigmarole which included, "No mamma; no papa; no brother; no sister! Baksheesh, sahib!" And he conveyed the fact that he was ready to be fed by lifting his shirt and slapping his tummy

in the approved beggar fashion. Then we saw that he was a girl!

The G.I. humor which this startling development engendered is to be imagined, but not written. Anyway, it served to surmount the growing animosity between O'Toole and Brooklyn, at least for the time being. We all listened with amusement to the stratagems the G.I.'s were using to get the little girl to go short on the acrobatics and long on the belly slapping. She succeeded unusually well, too, for soon all she was doing was slapping her tummy for baksheesh. She'd never run into anything like it before, I'll wager. But she raked in plenty of change on that deal. Soon she skipped on down the convoy to put on the show for the chaps at the tail end—and with the same results, no doubt.

Toward afternoon we were munching biscuits from our "C" rations in a shady spot near a cesspool called Fatehpur. Suddenly, out of the woods near by, there appeared a large herd of monkeys: big ones. Brooklyn and O'Toole were standing near each other, O'Toole waiting for a chance to even the score. It came.

"So I'll be —!" said Brooklyn, pointing to the monkeys. "Irishmen all over the world; you can't get rid of 'em!"

And O'Toole started swinging.

The monkeys and the fight got the boys to thinking again about the hunting that Major Philpott had told them about. "Where there are monkeys, there are always tigers," somebody said. However, beyond a few blue buck, which the boys didn't recognize, thinking they were native cattle, we saw nothing that looked like game. But we were getting up into wilder country, all right; so anything could happen.

We found the British cantonment at Allahabad deserted



except for a handful of our boys and a couple of R.A.F.'s. The men were tired and grimy from the foul dust of the Grand Trunk Highway; so we pulled the convoy in, gassed up ready for the morning, and gave the men the rest of the afternoon off.

After everything had been taken care of properly, we got cleaned up ourselves and then sought Captain Richardson, the C.O. of the post. He had been on the Mariposa with Bob and Slick Adams; so he and Bob had a lot of wood to saw. Finally, he directed us to the barracks for transient officers. As he was leaving, he turned back to say:

"Oh, by the way, fellows, take good care of your valuables. We've had an epidemic of thievery around here the last few days. Only last night someone got into Collins' room and got away with three hundred rupees. Evans, in the next room, lost sixty rupees. Neither of them heard a thing; and they're both very light sleepers, so they claim."

"Light sleepers, eh?" I said. "Everybody's a light sleeper if you listen to him; they're the hardest to wake up."

"Well, Chaplain, that's what they tell me. Collins claims that the bark of the trees will wake him up. Some of us have been thinking that the thieves must be using some kind of sleeping gas on the boys. Nonsense, of course."

"That little nip before going to bed was too much for them, more like," I said, not too audibly. "By the way, how are the bearers, Captain? They all right, do you think?"

"Oh, the natives we have on the place are above suspicion. Highly recommended by the British, in fact."

"So was Benedict Arnold," said Bob as we turned away.

"Could be they're Hindu fakirs," said Bob turning back to me. "Could be they yogied the boys." Bob is from East Texas, and therefore isn't very bright sometimes.

"Could be," agreed Captain Richardson. "Well, best of luck. And if you come to dinner, don't forget it's at seven-thirty. S'long."

"I'm going to have my forty-five on the table handy," said Bob. "And anybody comes into my room, off goes his — head."

"You leave that pistol in your B-4 bag," I said sternly. "No use arming the thieves if you don't have to. I can't think of anything more convenient for a robber than for you to leave that gun out where he can get at it. Why, a thief would have to fire a whole clip to make you turn over and stop snoring, Tex."

"You're sure right about that, Chaplain," grinned Bob.

We spent a delightful evening at Allahabad. We drove around and looked the town over for about an hour, and then we found a little bar run by an old retired British soldier. At the door we met a young Irishman who was in the R.A.F. but out of funds. With true Texas hospitality, Bob took him under his wing. Shamrock ordered the drinks, and we paid for them. What a knowledge that kid had of such worldly things! And what a talker he turned out to be! He was born in Limerick, and after fifteen minutes of him we concluded that he must have licked the Blarney Stone down to a mere pebble before he was out of rompers. What got us was his gall. Why, he began to twit us about the tall tales that Americans tell. That guy could snow us under any day of the week! For instance, about halfway through the evening he told us he had shot a jackal eleven feet long. And when Bob, who claimed the biggest jackals in the world come from Texas, slapped his sides and roared, this chap got a bit miffed and offered to sell Tex the skin of the beast for thirty rupees spot cash, and to send it to him as soon as he got back to his post at Vichy (wherever that is).

"I'll call his — bluff," whispered Bob, leaning over to me. "I'll take him up on it and buy it."

"Where's your brains?" I said hoarsely. "Perhaps the darned thing isn't worth thirty rupees. Give him fifteen roops and tell him you'll send him the rest after you get the skin."

"Yeah! You shore right at that," said Bob, whose voice was becoming a bit thick.

It was a good thing that I remained sober, or Bob would have been gypped. I gave him fifteen roops of Bob's money, thus saving him the other fifteen. I can't stand people making fools of themselves with drink!

After a couple more drinks—on Bob's part—we drifted back to the post. I took the end room as is my custom, and Bob took the next one to it. We turned in for the night.

I was just about to doze off when I thought I heard a stealthy movement on the back porch. Grabbing my flashlight and a forty-five, I sneaked out the front and ducked around the back. In two seconds I had a most villainous-looking native at the far end of the forty-five. The scuffle got Bob out.

"I caught him in the act," I said.

"What act, Chaplain?"

"The act of trying to get into our rooms, of course. I sneaked out into the shadows and had him before he knew it."

I prodded this native in the ribs with the pistol several times to impress him. "Now, *jau!*" I said. "Or I will shoot you ek, do, tin times if I catch you again."

The wog just babbled something unintelligible to us and ran off. We turned in once more, and I settled for a good night of uninterrupted sleep. And I was quite well, thank you, when the stealthy noise on the porch got me up again.

The same darned thing, and the same darned native. I got Bob out again.

"This post really is overrun with thieves," I said. "Let's march this one over to Captain Richardson and let him turn him over to the chokidars."

Captain Richardson was also one of these light sleepers, it seemed. It took us ten minutes of roaring and battering at the door to get him out. He finally came to the door in a half-trance, and when I explained the situation he burst out laughing.

"Why, Chaplain," he said through his mirth, "that's no thief; that's the chokidar."

"You're right!" said Bob, coming out of his coma. "The Padre here caught him trying to chokidar his way into our quarters."

"No, no! You don't understand. The chokidar is the native policeman we employ to guard the place at night."

"You mean to tell me that the United States government pays good money to hire—" I began to expostulate.

"Oh, sure, sure. They're all O.K. They look a little tough, perhaps, but they're highly recommended by the British. The C.I.D. runs a check on every one of them."

"Highly recommended by the British, eh?" I said. "Anyway, Captain, will you do me a favor?"

"Anything you say, Chaplain."

"O.K. Tell this man that we don't want him to guard our quarters at all, and that if I catch him once more I'll shoot him without question. Tell him to tell all his buddies that I really sleep light and have itchy fingers."

"If that's what you want, Chaplain, O.K. But I warn you—"

He turned to the native and let forth a stream of Wog-talk.

"Why not let those boys guard our place, Chaplain?" protested Bob as we made our way back to our quarters.

"Did you ever hear of the Maccam Trucking Company in St. Louis, Bob?"

"Oh, sure. Branch in Kansas City."

"That's the firm."

"But what's that got to do with scrambled eggs on toast, Chaplain?"

"Only this: Some of their drivers were stealing them blind one time. The stuff was missing from the trucks all the time; but they didn't seem to be able to catch anybody. Finally, they decided to hire a private detective to keep watch and they selected one of their own drivers for the job. They thought he would be the best man because he was right on the job, and therefore less likely to arouse the suspicion of the thieves."

"Did they catch the thieves?"

"They certainly did not. In fact, losses nearly doubled the first month. I know, because I—well, I know."

"I think I see your point. Maybe you got something there, sure enough."

Captain Richardson saw us off the next morning after breakfast. We said our thanks and goodbyes and prepared to leave. Then suddenly the Captain turned to Bob.

"Lose anything last night, Bob?"

"Not a thing, Captain. Not a thing. How did you come out?"

"Well, I don't exactly know yet. My B-4 bag is missing with my camera in it. But I might have left it somewhere and forgotten it. I could swear, though, that it was in my room yesterday."

"How about the chokidars?" I asked sarcastically.

"No. They'd be afraid to pull off anything like that. Besides, they're—"

"Highly recommended by the British," we finished for him.

"Now if that ain't a crock!" said Bob as we roared off down the highway.

"Remember what I said about the Maccam Company, Bob?" And we laughed heartily.

The day after we left Allahabad we turned off the Grand Trunk south and made for the hills we could see in the distance. Now we began to see game of all kinds: big birds like storks, flamingoes, more monkeys and baboons, and some blue buck—which the boys recognized now. It was generally agreed that when we hit the hills there'd be game a plenty. Bob had gone ahead to scout the road; the rest of the convoy was driving slowly through the dust. Suddenly, a big tiger jumped up in a rice paddy about a hundred yards off and made for the brush. With a whoop and a roar the boys scrambled off the trucks and gave chase, led by Peeler, who turned a jeep out into the chase. It took me a half-hour to get them all back, and even then Peeler's jeep had to be towed out of a rice paddy.

"What do you mean by taking off like that?" I demanded.

"It was a tiger, sir," said Greenwald.

"A real tiger?" I asked doubtfully.

"I didn't know they had the imitation kind in India, sir," said Greenwald haughtily.

"Well—er—I mean, it could have been a leopard," I said apologetically.

"Not on your life, sir," said Greenwald, warming to the subject. "This was old Stripes himself, sir, if I know my mutton. Big as a calf and lopin' right along."

"Yeah!" said Smoky Rogers. "Most of us guys was dozin'. But we soon got the lead out of our pants when we heard the shootin'. Thought we wuz bein' ground-strafed."

"Anyway," I said, "the way you go after things, that tiger skin will be so full of holes, you can use it for a mosquito net."

"Oh, yeah? Listen, Chaplain, sir, that baby was lopin' like Greeny says, but he had a hell of a good tail wind, 'cause our boys didn't get nowheres near him."

Evidently Peeler thought he ought to have another chance at the big cat.

When Bob got back to us, I told him about it, and when we stopped for chow, he laid down the law.

"There'll be no more shooting or hunting by the personnel of this convoy," he said. "Any man caught disobeying, gets charges."

The boys just grinned and looked wise. They knew Bob couldn't prefer charges against the whole gang; it would look too bad for him. My guess was that any time another big cat hove to on the runways, orders would be about as useful as an umbrella in a monsoon. We didn't have long to wait, either.

It was getting on toward evening, and Bob was keeping right close looking for a place to camp. Suddenly a big cat ran across the road, smack ahead of us.

"Tally-ho!" yelled the boys from way down, and off they were again, guns blasting like ack-ack. Bob was far in the lead of the pack, too, with a Tommy gun in the crook of his arm. The boys were weary when they returned, and they were all convinced that hunting tigers by chasing them was just no dice.

"You see that baby go?" said Tennessee to nobody in particular. "Holy cow! Those babies kin sure move, suh. Make

one of these heah greyhoun's look like he was posin' for his pitcher. Yes, sirree!"

That was the last real game we saw until we hit the camp where we were supposed to be stationed. We pulled into this place dead tired and aching all over from the jogging we had received on those roads. Nobody was interested in hunting for a couple of days, either, despite the terrific noise the animals made in the jungles at night. The general opinion was that the game would keep. "Must be millions of animals and fauna out there," observed one chap when the jackals and hyenas started their nightly song.

By the end of the week the boys had caught up on the sack time they lost on the trip up; and, primed by the ground echelon which had got there ahead of them, they were eager to scour the hills and jungles in search of tiger-skin rugs and bearskin bedspreads they had promised their wives and sweethearts. It sounded as if the Second Front had opened up. I could pick out the Garands, the '03's, and some Tommy guns. Not many forty-fives, though. It went on like that for about two weeks until the Colonel decided to take a turn at the range. But there was no range.

"No range!" he said in surprise. "Then where's all the shooting going on?"

That ended the hunting. The Colonel called all ammunition in and put out an order that there was to be no shooting of any kind without official permission. "How are we going to tell whether it's our own men or Jap paratroopers?" he asked. And no one could answer. It was just as well, for no one ever shot or caught anything worth while. Oh, sure, almost every G.I. had caught himself a jackal pup, and four of them came home with bear cubs.

Life surely palled on our boys after that. They nearly went frantic trying to think of something to do besides poker and



blackjack. They were just starting to think that they were war-weary when the Santals hit the post.

The Santals are a jungle people, black as coal, and said to be the original people of India. They still hunt with bows and arrows, and when they're not doing that, they're beating drums in the jungles. The local police commissioner was asked to aid us in getting labor for the runways. He sent out a drum message; the Santals were the answer. They brought their women and children with them, as well as their drums and bows and arrows.

One G.I. got the idea of trading some cigarettes for a bow and some arrows, and the race was on again. Everybody soon had a bow and arrow, and everybody was practicing archery. It got so you never knew when an arrow would come sailing over the barracks and land in your skull. Some of the more enterprising chaps made crossbows which worked in trigger-fashion, but they soon gave that idea up: they had to walk too far to retrieve the arrows, and then, like as not, they'd find them sticking in somebody's cow, which is a serious business to a Hindu. You never saw so many cows as they had up there. Well, frames, anyway. You could hang your hat on the thigh bone of every single one of them.

For a while the Santals added a bit of zest to the place. Every time they saw a tiger or hyena, they would set up a terrific din, yelling and shouting. As soon as our boys got the significance of all that noise, there would be a general rush for bows and arrows to give chase. I learned to rush, too; but inside to safety. Their luck with bows and arrows, however, was no better than with the guns. To hunt with bows and arrows you've got to sneak up on the quarry and take them unawares. Our boys used to rush through like the Twenty Mule Team. They soon lost interest in the whole thing and turned to trading for jungle drums. They even

got tired of looking after the bear cubs and jackal pups; so they turned them loose. The jackals went back to the jungle, but the bear clubs, who had come to like G.I. chow, refused to leave. They were named Percy, Algernon, Tomkins, and Hotchkiss.

It didn't take those cubs long to find the garbage pails at the back of the mess halls. All four of them took over and drove off the Pi dogs. From then on they made a picnic of it. It was pretty risky being around when the garbage was to be put out. It finally got so the K.P.'s couldn't get the cans out for fear of the bears. The cubs jumped them at the screen doors and pawed the cans down. Finally they got a detail to beat the cubs off with bamboo poles, while the K.P.'s got the cans of garbage out.

One day the Colonel happened along when this garbage detail was going into action. Did he blow his top!

"Shoot every animal on the post!" he howled to Willy, the Adjutant. "We'll all get the rabies. There's a theater directive against pets, anyway."

The box score at the end of two days of hunting all these pets makes interesting reading: Pi dogs, 179; crows, 115; hawks, 75; bear cubs, 0; jackals, 0; monkeys, 0; hyenas, 0.

Nobody had the heart to shoot the cubs; and I don't blame them. They were tough little rascals, but they were also cute. Finally, some of the fellows got a truck and loaded it with garbage and drove about twenty miles out into the country, dumped the whole lot and drove off like Hades. No one went hunting now for fear of meeting Percy, Algernon, Tomkins, or Hotchkiss. No one wanted to spend the rest of his life trying to get rid of those little devils.

Thus the final echoes of the truck convoy died away, and we turned seriously to other matters.

## SCREW BALLS

THE trip with the truck convoy had brought me into close personal contact with at least eighty of the men in my outfit for the first time. If they were representative of the group as a whole, I reasoned, then I was in the screwiest outfit in India, and there were going to be no dull moments on my hands. Nor was I far wrong in my surmise. As I look back upon it now, it is hard for me to decide who were the screwiest: the officers or the G.I.'s. You can judge for yourself.

The first real problem that faced us when we reached our operating base in Bihar was that of the defense of the area. It was not long after the Japs took Burma, and everybody in India, particularly the British, was convinced that an invasion of India was imminent. Most of the civilians we came to know had already sent their personal belongings off to England in the conviction that the Japs would be moving soon. If the Japs had only realized the fatalism with which India viewed the coming invasion and its certainty of success, they would surely have come, too, no doubt. Anyway, we had to think seriously in those days about paratroops.

The man who seemed most concerned with the problem was our chief of operations, Stromberg. Everybody liked Strom. His very exuberance and scatter-brainedness delighted us and served as a trigger-release for the tensions that often developed in the outfit. Strom wasn't Jewish; but he felt that his name suggested that he was; and so he was quite touchy on the point. He threatened to knock my block off one day over this matter.

The entire staff was at breakfast, and on this particular morning they had selected Stromberg as the boy to rib—a sort of verbal sauce that seems to savor every meal. I know I came in for my share of ribbings. They were ragging him about his plans for foiling Japanese paratroopers, and he was taking it in good shape, too. I kept quiet all this time, but when I saw they were really piling it on, I burst out into a smile and quietly observed:

“Vot’s hepp’ning to Stromboig shouldn’t heppen!”

Strom exploded with one burst and left the mess hall. Everyone thought he was kidding, and had finished his breakfast. But he wasn’t. When he came in for lunch, he stalked over to my room with his sleeves rolled up. Like a shot I remembered his sensitivity about this Jewish business and I realized that I should have to do something or take a beating from this lean Texan. As he came in through my door, I stood up and thrust out my hand before he could say a word.

“I’m sorry, Strom,” I said. “It was thoughtless of me, and I shouldn’t have said it. I just forgot for the moment how you feel about the whole thing.”

He softened immediately. “Chaplain,” he said, “on every post I’ve been, the boys have kidded me about this Jewish business. I’m sick of it. Why,” he broke into a laugh, “someone even called up my mother once and asked her if she had time to serve at some kind of an affair in the synagogue.”

Thereafter, though, the password on the post was: “What’s hepp’ning to Stromboig shouldn’t heppen.” And some joker called him up one day and invited his participation in establishing a synagogue on the post. After that little tiff he had with me and my ready apology, he placed me above suspicion.

Strom was one of the best pilots in the Air Corps, in my way of thinking. Others must have thought so, too, for he

was selected to fly one of the planes up to the operating base from Karachi. That's how it was that he got there ahead of the rest of the outfit. He met us with a serious face and the announcement that the Japs could take the place over whenever they had a mind to. Besides, the native laborers working on the revetments were probably in the pay of the Japs, all three thousand of them. There was absolutely no defense, it seemed, for the Gurkha guards didn't even know that we were at war with anybody. The Colonel became somewhat worried; then Strom unfolded his defense plan. Or perhaps I should say "plans"; for Strom's fertile brain had evolved dozens.

Of Strom's plans, Plan Sixty-eight was the best. Plan Sixty-eight was really a combination of four plans, A, B, C, and D. It was up to the Colonel to pay his money and take his choice. He took them, all right, on the spot, and placed Strom in charge of their execution, which put poor old Strom on a bit of a spot. He was a planner, he explained to me, not a carry-outer.

But Strom met the situation like a Texan. He scrapped A, B, C, and D at once. Instead, he organized all available men into guard platoons which were to be routed out by a series of false alarms to keep them on their toes. Further, he organized the Gurkhas so that they could cooperate with our men in case of an attack—which was beginning to seem more and more remote to the rest of us, who were recalling that the Japs had failed to attack the place in the eight months it had been defenseless. Anyway, the Colonel was satisfied with Strom's work.

Within two weeks Strom had all the Gurkhas marching and changing guard with the finesse of the Grenadiers. But they were still armed with bamboo sticks and Gurkha knives. That didn't satisfy Strom. The Japs live on bamboo sticks,

he said, or was it stalks? And as for Gurkha knives, everybody knows they're made in Japan; so no Japanese would be afraid of them.

So the Gurkhas came to have rifles, our rifles. They took to them slowly at first, largely because they couldn't understand the instructions given in army English. Anyone who has heard "Hup! Tup! Thrup! Fup!" knows how army English goes. But Strom stayed right with it. He taught the little brown men the necessary words, "Shoot!" and "Fire!" He gave them to understand that they were to shoot or fire at anyone who failed to stop, or who tried to get to the planes through the guard, even if he wore an American uniform, for the Japs were quite likely to wear American uniforms. Nothing! Nothing, would stop the Japs from doing this bit of skulduggery, said Stromberg. And nothing would have stopped them, except the fact that our uniforms were ten sizes too big for them.

Soon the Gurkhas caught on perfectly and said, "Teek" (O.K.); and Strom sat back to enjoy the fruits of his labor. The guard marched past his quarters every day at four-thirty and gave him the Nepalese version of "Ump'ny! Eyes tight! Eyes front!" Strom took it like a general.

Then one night a hurry call came in from the dispersal area. A brush fire had broken out and was rapidly sweeping toward the planes. Strom took immediate charge. He commandeered a jeep and me and rushed out at full throttle. When we got to the line, a Gurkha stepped out and leveled his rifle at us and yelled, "Halt!" Strom stopped that jeep on a dime and leaped out. Rushing toward the guard he yelled, "Fire! Fire! Don't shoot! Fire!"

The Gurkha said, "Teek!" and raised his rifle.

If Strom hadn't pulled through, I should have been very sorry about that synagogue hoax.

By far the queerest ducks in the headquarters gang were Scott, the S-4, and Lewe, the S-2. Lewe was perhaps the best bred man in the outfit. He had a natural courtesy that delighted everybody, but what amused everyone was the way he could blow off toward the natives. He had no patience with them at all. Scott's besetting sin was a don't-let-go-of-it complex. He positively loathed having to issue anything. The climax to this attitude came one day as we were walking back from chow.

"Now I've got to find a nice warm room to store that Link trainer so that it don't rust on me," he said complainingly.

"What's a Link trainer, Roy?" I asked casually.

"A gadget to train pilots to fly in bad weather."

"Then you don't want to store it; you want to turn it over to the squadrons so they can have the benefit of it."

"—, no! I've got to keep it safe in case the Inspector General comes around and wants to see it."

From past experience I knew it would be fruitless to argue the point. I took myself off to McCarten, one of the squadron C.O.'s and one real man.

"Know what a Link trainer is, Mac?" I asked.

"Sure thing, Chaplain. We could sure use one with this monsoon weather coming on, too."

"Scott just got one in. He's looking for a nice warm spot to store it for posterity, as usual."

"Thanks, Chaplain. It's as good as ours right now."

Mac got the Link trainer, and Scott bleated for a month over it. He's still trying to find out who tipped Mac off about the thing.

Lewe and Scott were much like a pair of old grannies, sometimes. I recall a little incident over which I've had many a laugh. I refer to it as "Twenty-one Rounds—of Aspirin."

We had bombed everything within range from this base

in Bihar and we were preparing to move up closer. In fact, most of the group had already gone on up by plane, leaving a few of us to come on the train with the equipment. The air was as sticky as a toddler's fingers and a peculiar silence seemed to pervade the place; the kind of funereal atmosphere that seems always to hang around deserted barracks. A wind was trying hard to squeeze in from the southeast, and I decided to strip down and lie in my bunk, which was just outside Scott's window, and enjoy the threatened breeze.

Scotty was at his table reading, insensitive as usual, to the oppressive heat. His playthings surrounded him: an assortment of partly filled bottles, some of them the parting gifts of the men who had gone up by air. They were intended to console him during the long wait for the train which had been promised, Indian-fashion, "immediately."

Lewe was in his own room bustling around trying to get two piano crates of assorted clothing, tooth paste, gin bottles, Gurkha knives, socks, and medicines into two groaning B-4 bags. Suddenly he appeared at Scotty's door, stood quietly for a moment or two, and then:

"Say, Roy, where'n the — can I get twenty-one rounds of ammunition for my forty-five?"

"I don't know; I don't have any. Try the 35th. They've got fifty thousand rounds which I issued to them for practice purposes. Maybe they got some left."

"Yeah. But they won't let go of any of it. I tried 'em."

"O.K.," said Roy. "You go over and tell 'em if they don't come across, I'm pulling thirty-five thousand rounds from 'em to send up as an advance issue. They got it. Don't let 'em tell you they haven't."

Lewe looked dubious, scratched his nose, and left without further comment. Scotty poured himself another drink and went on reading his "who-done-it." Meanwhile, the bustle



in Lewe's room was resumed with increased energy and verbal comment. Suddenly Lewe emerged and came back to Scotty's room again, as if he had just remembered something. Silence for a moment while Scotty finished a paragraph and looked up.

"Say, Roy, where can I get twenty-one rounds for my forty-five? That's what I want to know, damn it."

Roy removed his pipe and spoke quietly. It was evident that Lewe was in one of those moods.

"Go to the 35th like I told you—they've got it—and lemme know if they don't shell out, and I'll pull thirty-five thousand rounds from 'em so — fast they'll feel the breeze."

"Yeah. You never can get a — thing out that outfit. That — redhead, Flowers—"

"You lemme know. Come on, pour yourself a drink. We gotta finish this stuff before we leave."

"Just had a couple."

"Well, take another. Good for you. Loosen your bowels when you get on that — train. I always say . . ."

Lewe poured himself a chota peg and settled down to enjoy it. Suddenly he jumped up. "—! I gotta finish packing. Don't know where I got all this junk." He gulped his chota peg and was gone.

Once more sounds of tremendous activity came from his room, punctuated with assorted Indian and American cuss words. Soon he was back at Roy's door once more.

"Say, Roy! About ammunition for my forty-five. Got any?"

"—, no! I told you where to get it. You say I sent you, and if they don't hand it over, thirty-five thousand rounds will be leaving them tomorrow—"

"Yeah. I don't want thirty-five thousand. Got too much — junk the way it is. Just gimme twenty-one rounds."

"Pour yourself another drink, Lewe. Here, try this whisky that Kay Adams left. Belly wash! But we gotta finish it."

"Like I say," said Lewe, throwing down a chota peg and pouring another burra peg, "those fat-cats up in Delhi, they got Scotch. All they want, too. Fellow that runs the mail plane was telling me it only costs 'em twenty-one roops a bottle. Can ya beat that?"

"Yeah, Delhi," scoffed Roy. "Hell of a war they're fighting up in Delhi. Ha! The Rear Echelon! The — Far-in-the-Rear Echelon, if you ask me. Up there they're fighting the battle of Per Diem Hill. Bearers bring 'em tea in bed at eight o'clock—"

"They got everything in Delhi," Lewe resumed, "shows, booze, cigarettes, and even Limey women secretaries."

"Yep! It's a hard war up in Delhi. Sure do," Roy agreed. "Now if old Bill Grear was in this theater," he continued, "he'd have them boys outa their sacks and on their feet doin' —"

"We're the suckers," Lewe broke in. "The original chapter of the F.B.I.—the Forgotten Bastards of India. Another one, Roy?" he asked, pouring himself a big one and setting the empty bottle on the floor.

"O.K. But lemme try some of Adam's whisky this time. It's bamboo juice, really."

The silence which followed was finally broken by Lewe. "—! What am I sitting here for? I gotta finish packin'." And he was gone once more to continue the heaving, sorting, throwing, and cussing which he called packing. In ten minutes he was back again.

"Shay, Roy." His voice was trailing labels in the dust. "Wonner where I c'n get twenny-one roun's for my fort'-fi?"

"— —, Lewe, I tol' you four times. Go to Flowers. See Haldane. He'll give ya all ya need. An', if he don't, just

lemme know, and tomorrow I'll yank thirry-fi' thousan' roun's—"

"Hell with thirry-fi roun's! Can't carry that much. All I want is— Shay, where's that Carewe's that was here before?"

"Down the hatch. Finished it. Don' last forever. Here, try some o' this bamboo juice. You got a cold anyway."

"Always got a cold. My sinuses, Doc says. Now if I had twenty-one roun's—"

"Bes' thing for a cold," said Roy, biting his pipe harder, "is take all the aspirin you can hold, keep your bowels open, and go to bed." Roy was launched on his favorite subject: his grandmother's medical lore. "Now, me," he continued, "I get a col', I drink lots of whisky, take aspirin and keep my bowels open. Old army doctor in Panama tol' me that if you move your bowels often you never get no serious effects from a cold."

Lewe looked at him through a dense fog. "Yeah?"

"Yeah!"

"Where'n the hell do you move 'em to so often?"

"You don't move 'em; you just move. Mos' doctors 'll say, move your bowels twice a day, night an' mornin', then you got somethin'."

"Yeah, the crud! Hell with your bowels! Why should I move your — bowels? What I ask for is bullets, not bowels. Twenny-one roun's for my forty-fi'. I'll give you all the aspirin you can hold in your bowels for twenny-one roun's. Got loads o' the — stuff."

"Where you get it?"

"Where did I get all the other — junk I got to put in those two bags? Snagged it some'ers, I guess. Everything but ammunition."

"The common col'," went on Scotty, ignoring Lewe's speech, "is the mos' dang'rous affliction known to medical

science—and doctors. If they fin' a cure we save more men than gets killed by bullets or cancer every year per annum. But if you don't have a cure, the nex' bes' thing is aspirin. Aspirin and keep your bowels open. That'll do it."

"I always drink lots of whisky for mine," Lewe commented, finishing his drink and pouring another burra peg. "What'll it be, Roy?"

"That whisky sure is rough," Roy commented. "But we better finish it," he added hastily. "Gimme half a shot, top half."

Lewe poured with a shaking hand, knocked over the glass, cussed profusely, and poured another. "Rotgut!" he muttered.

"Yeah, but bes' thing for the G.I.'s or the crud," Roy agreed through gulps. "Goes down like turpentine, but kills every germ in your bowels. *M'ah!* Now if ya feel a col' comin' on, lots o' aspirin, a couple good slugs, an' keep your bowels—"

"B'lieve you got somethin' there, Roy." *Gulp! Oh—ah!*

"Yeah. Now if I have a col', I . . ."

Lewe wasn't listening; he was gazing into space, his eyes glassy. Glassier than Scotty's. The hand which held his glass drooped dangerously. Around both the boys the floor was littered with bottles.

"I need fort'-fi' roun's for my twenny-fi'," Lewe mumbled. "Gor any, Roy?"

"Thirry-fi'th go' plenny. Tell Haldane, got to keep your bowels open. Lemme know if he don'. I'll drag thirry-fi' bags of asp'rin so damn fas' . . ."

The prolonged silence prompted me to get up and look the situation over. Roy was out cold; Lewe colder. The bottles had lost the battle, but they had inflicted casualties,

too. I dragged Lewe back to the boar's nest he called his room. It was a shambles. The floor was littered with piles of clothing and knick-knacks. One large package caught my eye. It was labeled "Aspirin." I grabbed it and pulled out a small heavy carton. It was marked:

20 cartridges

Pistol Ball

Caliber .45 M1911

Ammunition Lot W.C.C. 1061

There must have been a dozen of them in that package. I laid Lewe out on his bunk and placed the package of ammunition on his chest and propped it there with some of the junk off the floor. In his dreams he would be striving to move something. And it wouldn't be Roy's bowels, either.

The enlisted men were just as screwy as the officers, if not more so. One of the jobs I had arrogated to myself was to visit the barracks in the evening after work was over. As I entered someone would invariably call out: "Here's the Chaplain! Get your crying towels ready!"

Then they would laugh and kid about crying on the Chaplain's shoulder. Despite all their kidding, they did plenty of crying on my shoulder, anyway.

On one of my trips through the barracks I came upon the hottest collection of pin-up girls I'd ever seen. I gazed at them thoughtfully for a minute; then I said: "Men, this collection is a Chaplain's morale buster. Don't you think you ought to take the objectionable ones down?"

"For you, Chaplain, we'll do it," said Denton. "Come around tomorrow and see."

Personally, I could never work up much sweat about pin-up girls. On the whole, they are beautiful. And they're certainly more wholesome than the vulgar obscenities which

came out of France during the last war. To old Private G. I. the pin-up girl represents his conception of what the American girl is like. She is the ideal he has his heart set upon back home.

One of the craziest incidents that ever occurred in our outfit concerned one of our C.O.'s and a Red Cross girl. Beverly was from the Deep South and sported an accent you could shred with a grater. Her one ambition was to go on a bombing mission against the Japanese. She got her wish in a way. Polfitt took her up one Sunday morning for a ride in a B-25. Either by accident or by design, probably both, they were soon over Burma. On the way home, Polfitt spotted a Japanese camp with the little brown men bustling about getting their noon meal ready. Like a shot the bomber was upon them, strafing them with all six nose guns, while Beverly in the copilot's seat was rooting for all she was worth. They repeated the performance on another camp before they finally got home. That dame wasn't afraid of a thing.

Somehow, the General came to hear about it and Polfitt got the devil. Bev was sent back to Karachi for reassignment. I think she still holds the record of being the first if not the only American girl to go on a combat mission against the Japs.

That Southern gal was as innocent as she was cute. One day I was driving her to town in the staff car. On the way in we came upon a flock of vultures working over a dead dog. Bev had never seen such a sight before and it both fascinated and nauseated her. As a big vulture would duck his head in and come out with a yard of entrails, she would give a new and louder shriek:

"Chaplun, Ah cain' stand this heah awful sight no mo'." Then, after a pause of peering through her fingers: "Drahve a little closuh, Chaplun!"

## INDIAN BEARERS

ONE of the first problems after we reached our base in Bihar was to adjust ourselves to the use of Indian bearers. The British are wedded to the system—have been for over a century, in fact. The good bearer is an invaluable adjunct to a household; he knows everything and sees that everything is done. Often he is the personal valet of the sahib. In peacetime his pay may run up to the thirty or forty rupees (ten or fifteen dollars) a month, but he usually manages to make a few more rupees on the marketing. And this is interesting: The money the bearer makes on the bazaar is not considered stealing either by the bearer or by his master; it is looked upon as his privilege to cheat on the prices of things bought for the household. His reasoning goes something like this: "I buy the goods for my master; but no man buys and sells without profit. Therefore I buy the goods and resell to my master, at a fair profit."

One Englishwoman, while defending the low wages paid her bearer, said to me, "And of course, he has the bazaar money."

Toward the bearers, then, it is expected of the sahib that he exercise what is called "benevolent blindness." If the sahib is niggardly about the matter, he is not a pukka sahib at all, but a cheap skate, and few bearers will work for him.

While we were in Karachi, our C.O. was firmly set against the system of using Indian bearers for two reasons: It ill becomes a democratic folk, and too many of the bearers may be in the pay of the enemy. Both are sound arguments, in my

estimation. But when we got up to our advanced Base, we found the bearers in full control. The Colonel would have gotten rid of them on the spot had it not been for the fact that he had far more pressing problems to deal with first; and by the time he got around to the bearer problem, the heat was so intense that we were glad to have the bearers around to mix drinks and in other ways help make us comfortable. So we kept the bearers. And in the heat of India, they can be a godsend.

Now an Indian bearer is a specially trained man. You employ him, and he takes over and knows exactly what has to be done and how to get it done. The sahib rarely has to issue an order to him. But with the coming of the Americans it was soon evident that there weren't enough trained bearers to go around; either we or the British would have to take untrained men. It was usually the British, for we paid higher wages, much to their disgust. Occasionally, though, we had to take untrained men; but since we didn't know any better it didn't bother us much. Steve's bearer was one of these untrained men.

Rutnam was a Baptist Christian and very devout; so devout, indeed, that he wore out one of my Bibles in about two months. As a bearer he was worse than useless, but since he spoke good English, he was worth having around because he could convey our wishes to the other bearers. And without knowing it, he was a born comedian. Not only was Rutnam the living image of Charlie Chaplin in every conceivable aspect, but he had naturally the heart-rending pathos that the famous Charlie had to affect. He never did understand why we roared with laughter whenever he appeared.

One thing was sure: Rutnam worshiped the very ground Steve walked on. He hung around Steve like a noose, ready to light his cigarettes, to clean his shoes, to lay his clothes out,



or to mix his drinks. And of course the quiet Steve took anything from Rutnam. He might walk off with Steve's bunch of keys and thus make Steve walk to work; but when Steve caught up with him, Rutnam's face would drop in sheer consternation. The effect was so ludicrous that Steve would have to burst out laughing. He would look at me and say, with evident pride rather than disgust, "Chaplain, what do you make of him?" And Rutnam would break out into the pathetic smile so reminiscent of Charlie Chaplin.

Then Rutnam's wife came down with double pneumonia, and he asked Steve for a leave. Steve not only gave him a leave, but sent him thirty rupees every week for the six weeks he was gone. He rewarded Steve with a picture of himself holding the corpse of his wife in his arms—she had succumbed to the disease. Steve never permitted anyone to tease Rutnam about running around with other women after that.

When Steve left for China, Rutnam sat up all one night and wailed aloud. In the morning he came to me and begged me to take him to his "beloved master." I surely hated to tell him that it was impossible. How Steve had gotten away from him, I don't know; but I do know that when the weather opens up Rutnam will be on his way across the mountains into China to find Steve.

In the headquarters barracks we rejoiced in the ministrations of Babu and Sakoor, two of the most artful and perfect bearers India has ever turned out. Both of them spoke good English, and so were invaluable to us. In the afternoon I used to make tea for myself; but I always included the bearers. Now, since it was the bearer's job to make tea for the sahib and not the sahib's for the bearers, they looked upon me with wonder, finally confiding to Frank Ison that I was "rocky" in the head, but still a "very fine sahib." And they

continued to consider me insane, and therefore to be humored all the time we were together.

We treated our bearers well; so well, in fact, that some of them wrote us letters of thanksgiving for our presence in India. The following epistle was written to Bill Florence by his bearer, a Santal boy who had come to us through the Baptist Mission:

To The Captain Air Corps William G. Florence

Dear Sir,

With due most respectfully and humble submission I beg to state that:—I have been grown up and have learnt a little by the help of the American Baptist Mission. Now I can say freely to everyone with a loud voice that, I had no means or anyway to walk on the country if the American Baptist Mission would not help me in my childhood.

It is sure that you have seen the bad condition of the Santal peoples. I am one of the Santal peoples. Don't laugh at me. I am not so strong in English talking and writing. Please take me in your mind as a little child. I am becoming very surprize seeing the works of the American peoples. Their everything is good and wonderful. Therefore, I am bound now to write you something, though I am not so strong in English speaking and writing. The peoples of America are spending much money and many things. Not only money, but also the life. This is very difficult work for a man. I remember the death of Jesus Christ in this time. He died for the world peoples. It has been written in the Bible that where there is love, there is God. I believe that God has given them all power, and he has send them to India to save us to teach us and to lead us.

Sir it is true that the peoples of America are doing much for us. I am very sorry because I know nothing. I have nothing to give you for all this. What shall I give you for all this? I can not forget this benefit in my life. I know there is none to teach me and lead me in this world without the American peoples. Rev.

August A. Berg has done much for us (for the Santal peoples). And at the present Rev. Philip W. Geary and his wife Henrietta also is doing much for us (for the Santal peoples). So I love the American peoples very much.

And I believe that:—they are my teacher, leader and Savior. I am very anxious to be good as like the American peoples. And I want to make my friends good as like the American peoples are good. I hope and pray that:—you will be succeed soon in this war. And you will go back to America, leaving us after making peace in India.

Sir therefore already I am praying to all the gentlemen through you, please show me the way by which, I can be a good man as like the American peoples.

I will pray for your long life Sir,

Your most obediently

Dated the 26th Feb.

DURGA CHARAN MARMU

1943

Village—Behera

P.O.—Gatsila

Dist.—Singhum

The transformation the Americans effected in the lives and customs of the bearers in so short a time is really a matter for wonder. The British have been here more than a hundred and fifty years, but the Hindus still wear dhoties and go without shoes. At our post, on the other hand, within a few months every bearer was wearing a discarded G.I. uniform and G.I. shoes. It was a mistake in the first place for us to give them our discarded clothing to wear, for after that when a bearer needed a pair of pants, he just went around until he found a G.I. his size and had that man's bearer steal a pair for him from the luckless G.I. Soon they were wearing American underwear, socks, caps, and in every way trying to dress as much like us as possible. They succeeded so well that it is said that Zed Barnes, in one of his

less lucid moments, bawled one of them out for failing to salute.

I have seen Barney on the days after he gets news of his promotions, and I can well believe it.

The incidents which follow (both true in substance) illustrate the peculiar make-up of the Indian bearer—"bearah," as the British call him.

#### TEMPUS FUGITS

"The Slopeys are just as bad," said Wilson, otherwise "Willy," our Group Adjutant, "you can't teach 'em a dog-goned thing. Why, you give a Slopey a wheelbarrow and tell him to go bring a sack of cement, and he'll come back with the cement on one end of a pole slung across his shoulders and the wheelbarrow on the other end. I've been up there in China; I know."

We were discussing what seemed to us the hopelessness of teaching the Hindu bearers anything new, and Willy, who had been up in China for some time, was sounding off on his anthropology. He chewed viciously on one of his cigars. "Wold's right. Kick 'em all in the pants, that's what I say," he concluded.

"—!" sighed the Major. "When are those drinks coming? My tongue feels like an old duster. Here they are, half an hour late again. I still say gimme the Chinks!"

"It's probably the heat," said Willy. "Chinks and Wogs, they're all the same before the monsoons. They get a little fuzzy in the head from the damp. They tell me that the heat wrinkles the convulsions or something inside their brains."

"That's a crock right there!" snorted the Major. "They don't have any brains to get wrinkled. This is just a bit of their habitual screwiness gone to extremes. I still say, get rid

of the whole — bunch, and get some Chinks in here. All these Wogs are in cahoots with the Japs, anyway.”

Ralph Jordan shook his head. “Something’s hit ’em, that’s sure. Maybe it’s time for another religious festival. You can’t get a thing out of ’em when they get religion; and they get it pretty frequent around these parts.”

“Religion, —!” exploded the Major again. “They ain’t got no — religion. Sakoor told me he was a Christian.”

There was a general silence, during which each of us groped for new and plausible explanations for the uncertainties of Wog behavior. What had brought the subject up in the first place was the sudden lapse of our bearers from extreme punctuality in the preparation of our afterwork drinks when we got back to quarters, to chronological chaos. Whereas last week they had been on the dot, not only with drinks, but in getting us up in the mornings and bringing our shaving water, now they were apt to get us up at five, five-thirty, or six-thirty. You never knew which. Last week they had our iced drinks ready for us promptly at twelve noon and again at four-thirty. Now we got them at twelve-thirty, or we found them waiting for us with the ice all melted; which meant they must have been ready for an hour or so.

“Well,” the Major finally burst out, “if we ain’t going to fire the whole — bunch and get Chinks (which is still what I think we ought to do), I’m in favor of interrogatin’ ’em.” He was our S-2, and he lived to “interrogate.” “I’m in favor of finding out what’s wrong and laying the law down to ’em. I got a bunch of wallahs we picked up in the dispersal area to interrogate tomorrow, and I don’t want to get a late start again.”

Coming as it did from the Intelligence Section, that seemed like a sensible idea. We looked at the Major with new respect, for no one had suspected him of such clarity of thought and

expression. We all turned expectantly to Willy. He was the Adjutant, and therefore, we reasoned, it was his duty to go to see Sakoor and get an explanation and have this nonsense ended once for all.

"Maybe we ought to send the Chaplain," he began lamely, trying the old army game.

"Chaplain, —! We want action, not another lecture on the psychology of the Hindus!"

"O.K., O.K.," agreed Willy hastily. "I just thought—"

"Yo'-all git on the ball and fin' out why these Indians cain't do nothin' on tahm no mo'." Johnny was the Group Surgeon and a delightfully likable chap, but like many people from the Deep South, he had little patience with dusky folk. "Git along an' see if yo'-all cain' he'p these po' boys heah!"

"O.K. I'll go right over now and talk to the heathen right away. You boys be ready to back me up, too." Willy got up from his cot (which Ralph Jordan promptly fell into), wearily put on his shoes, and went forth to face the magnificently dignified Sakoor. The rest of us returned to our glasses and the topic which we had started discussing some months before, and which was no nearer exhaustion now than then: women.

"Wogs and women," commented Scotty, biting hard on his pipe.

"What about wogs and women that we haven't discussed backwards and forwards?"

"Nothing, 'cept you can't trust 'em for anything." There was more or less general agreement.

"—! Just let me see a white woman again! She doesn't have to be the trusting kind."

Sugar Boy Ison was so fervent that we couldn't decide for the moment whether he was praying or just thinking out loud again. Same thing, I guessed.

"It's a funny thing," continued Sugar, "but these — native women look lighter to me every week. You fellows noticed it?"

"Yeah!" said the Major. "And when I catch myself thinking like that I get in the jeep and drive twenty miles down the road to look at that missionary's wife. And then I get over it for a week or two. None of these wog floozies for me, Bud."

"You and me both! No Bengal rot for this child, either," joined Doc Stultz, the dentist.

"Ah got me a gal back home; but she cain' do me no good out chere," sighed Johnny. "An' if Ah don' git home soon, fo'-'F gwine git her sho 'nough, an' Ah ain' gwine be able to he'p the po' gal."

Johnny got up to pour the drinks again, and the rest of us sat back to sweat Willy out.

"Sakoor, Sakoor!" began Willy, feeling somewhat sheepish in the presence of the regal Sakoor.

"Salaam, Wilson Sahib!"

"Sakoor, how come you all time no come with no drinks pronto no more?"

To Willy, a wog is a lingual cross between a Chinaman and a Navajo.

"All time no come, master?" Sakoor was incredulous.

"All time no come on time. Too much early. Too much late. How come? You no stop this foolishment, come new bearers, jildi!"

"But, master, drinks always on time. By the clock-watch I—"

"Never on time, I said. Too much early; too much late!"

"Very sorry, sahib. Always on time." Sakoor drew himself up proudly. "Like the clock-watch e-say."

Willy looked perplexed. "Sakoor, what's this nonsense about a clock-watch?"

"Yes, master, the clock-watch. Chaplain sahib, he give Sakoor the clock-watch." Sakoor smiled kindly. "Very good man, Chaplain sahib."

"You mean you got a watch to tell time?"

"Yes, master. Drinks always on time now by clock-watch. Chaplain sahib he—"

"Let me see! Dekko jildi!" And Willy held out his hand.

Sakoor fished around in his shirttails for a few seconds and finally came up with a watch which he proudly held out to Willy. And what a watch! A battered, cheap PX watch, with a piece of Scotch tape wrapped around it to hold the celluloid crystal in place, but ticking lustily still.

"Well, I'll be d—!" muttered Willy. "Sakoor, you fix drinks, call sahibs in mornings by this thing?"

"Yes, master. Clock-watch very good. Chaplain sahib—"

*Woosh!* And Willy's arm performed a wide arc.

"Well, what's the dope?" we chorused when Willy came in through the door, grinning like a moron.

"All fixed. Nothing more to worry about. I always say, leave it to ye Adj." Willy removed his shoes and prepared for the Herculean task of getting Jordan out of his bunk.

"You mean you brought the lads to time already?" We could scarcely believe this miracle.

"Sure thing! All fixed. Nothing more to worry about. No more trouble."

Willy enjoyed making us drag the details out of him.

"What did Sakoor say? Could yo' he'p the po' boy any?"

"Oh, it was just another case of too big a dose of brotherly love by our dear Chaplain. He went and gave Sakoor an old dollar PX watch, that's all."



"You mean—"

"Yeah, I mean!"

"What did you do about it?"

"Do! Why, I took that little concrete mixer and heaved it with all I had out into the shrubbery. From now on those boys will move by the sun like their ancestors, and we'll be back on schedule."

"Just as I always tell you guys," reiterated the Major. "Civilization ruins 'em."

#### HOIMAN SAHIB

Babu, that prince of all Indian bearers, had gone on a two-weeks leave, and the wily old Sakoor, the chief bearer, had kept us without a substitute for three days. The Major stormed and roared and cussed, to no avail. Sakoor solemnly assured us that all the bearers had enlisted in the Indian Army to fight the Japs—and that was a pure and unadulterated crock, to put it in the words of the fellows.

It's strange how helpless a bunch of independent Yanks can become after they've been in the hands of a good bearer for a month or two. There must be a school for bearers somewhere where the prospective bearer is taught the quickest and surest methods of reducing sahibs to complete uselessness and dependence. Babu must have been the valedictorian. What a bearer that dusky rascal was! How the Limeys ever let go of him will always be a mystery to me. But perhaps he's as clever at making himself of no further value as he is at making himself indispensable. If this isn't it, then he probably broke his chains with the aid of the underground movement—if there is such a thing among Indian bearers.

Babu was uncanny in some ways. One merely had to think,

Gosh! It's hot! Wish I had a nice long ice-cold drink. Think I'll get up and see if I can find Ba—

"Cold drink, surr?"

There's old Babu standing before you with all the makings and an overage of ice. He could judge to the second how long a sahib could go without a cold drink. And, like God, he never seemed to need sleep, either.

Some idea of the esteem in which we came to hold Babu can be gleaned from the fact that the boys suggested that he take over the Intelligence Section of the post. The only thing that stopped our pushing it was the realization that his great talents would be wasted in a mere bombardment group. Babu is G-2 material if anything at all. I shall never forget my first meeting with this wizard of omniscience. I had been at the post just one day—long enough to know that I had to move my bed outside if I intended to survive the heat. After supper I sauntered over to the club for a chat with the fellows. And then someone said it was starting to rain. Oh, joy! we said. And then I remembered that my bed was outside getting soaked. As I drew up to my quarters all out of puff, there was this native moving my bed inside. He was quite dark, slightly bald, and sported a rich walrus mustache.

"Salaam, surr! I am Babu, surr. The e-second bearer, surr."

"Really? And who is the first bearer, Babu?"

"His name Sakoor, surr. He's boss of all camp, surr."

"Are you a Christian, Babu?"

"No, surr! No, surr! No, surr! I am honest man, surr. Native Christian is very big thief, surr. He will e-steal it from you many things. Yes, surr."

"And you don't steal, Babu?" I began to tease the old boy.

"No, surr! No, surr! I have been bearer all over India, surr. If you are not like, I will be bearer for you, surr, too. You are not like a cup of tea, surr, now?"

There it was! The very thing I was thinking in the back of my mind.

"Can you make a good cup of tea, Babu?" I tried to tease him a little more.

Babu smiled. He knew his answer wasn't necessary, but he gave it anyway. "If water is e-good, I make it good tea, surr. If water is e-bad, tea is can't be good, surr."

That was good sense, anyway. I nodded.

"If you are not want it, I bring it now the tea, surr."

Evidently "If you are want" and "If you are not want" meant the same thing to Babu. So I nodded again.

"You mean you have the tea all ready, Babu?"

"Yes, surr. All fix."

"But suppose I like coffee instead?"

"No, surr. No, surr! Other sahibs like coffee, surr. But you are not, surr." Babu looked stealthily around, and then smiled.

"You are pucka sahib, surr. Pucka sahib is e-take tea, surr."

I grinned at the old rascal's sly shaft and nodded again.

"Salaam, surr!"

"Salaam, Babu."

"Salaam, surr."

"Salaam, and all points west, Babu!"

"Salaam, surr."

"Salaam." This Salaam business was getting monotonous.

"Salaam, surr!"

But I held my peace this time, and Babu moved off.

I soon came to know Babu better. He was, as he said, strictly honest in every way. And, fair play to the chaps in our barracks, they left no temptation open to him, either. Not that they kept things under lock and key; quite the opposite; they turned the keys over to him. And we bak-sheeshed him so liberally that for the first few weeks Babu thought we were giving him our pay for safe keeping. Pretty

soon Babu was one of the gang, and we cut him in on the ice cream. Babu never lost his composure; never stepped out of line. Every time we gave him baksheesh he went through a stereotyped response. He'd come to attention, put his hand to his forehead, and say, "Salaam! Thank you, surr!" We soon learned to say "Salaam" only once in returning his salute; for Babu insisted on the last "Salaam." It was a matter of courtesy to him.

As I said, Babu was strictly honest. And the native Christians, as he said, were generally dishonest. It had nothing to do with Christianity, of course. It merely meant that many unscrupulous natives accept the Christian faith in order to get better jobs with the sahibs. We never knew Babu to take a drink of anything stronger than tea except on one occasion, although there was no shortage of bamboo juice on the post. I never even saw him drink the beer the fellows gave him.

And now we were without Babu. A few days ago he had solemnly informed us that he had been granted a fifteen-day furlough. Of course, no one had granted him anything at all; that was just his way of breaking it to us that he was off for a holiday whether we liked it or not. It was we who employed him, and we had granted him no furlough. But the old rascal knew very well that had he asked us for a leave we would have found a million excuses to refuse it. He had written to his brother in Lucknow, it seemed, telling him to buy presents for the sahibs who treated him so handsomely, and now he had to go to bring them back and pay his brother for them. The minute he spilled this bit of intelligence, there was an immediate rush all over the barracks to collect baksheesh for Babu. We got enough together to pay his way there and back, first class. We called up and made reservations for him on the mail (which he canceled on the sly and collected the difference on the third-class ticket, no doubt),

and we arranged to drive him to the station and to pick him up in a jeep when he came back.

Babu's train left at one o'clock in the morning. At ten the evening before, he waited upon us to say goodbye. I turned around and there he was.

"Salaam, surr!"

His right hand was to his forehead, and his eyes had a peculiar glassiness that I had not seen before.

"Salaam, Babu! Have a good time."

"Salaam, Chaplain, sahib!"

"Salaam and good morrow, Babu!"

"Salaam, surr!" Babu was swaying slightly.

"Salaam, again, Babu. A whole jugful."

"I go, surr. Salaam!"

"Have a good time, Babu, and leave the women alone."

"No, surr! Yes, surr! Yes, surr! No, surr!" Old Babu was confused on that one, all right.

"I come back in fourteen days, surr."

"Good! We'll be on hand to welcome you back to the fold like the black sheep of old."

"Thank you, surr." He started for the door, then turned and added, "If you are not want it, surr, I bring it back from Benares big cobra candle-e-stick, surr. Brass, surr."

"Put me down for two, Babu. How much do you—"

"No money, surr. Gift. Only fifty rupees, surr."

I peeled off five tens automatically for this gift. Only fifty rupees. Ha!

"Salaam! Thank you, surr!"

"Salaam, Babu!"

"Salaam, surr!"

"Sal—"

I caught myself in time, and Babu drifted into the next room to repeat the performance. The other boys came up

with fifty rupees per for a pair of candle-e-sticks, too. Babu's bandanna was bursting with baksheesh by the time he finished the barracks. I wondered if he would ever come back. If he did, would he bring all those candlesticks? They would weigh a ton. Would there be any change from my fifty rupees? Well, my chances seemed pretty good if Babu was telling the truth when he said he wasn't a Christian.

Here we were, now, without Babu, or anybody to take his place, if that were remotely possible. On the fourth day A.B. (after Babu), Sakoor, the chief bearer, waited upon us with a young man who, he said, would be willing to serve us until Babu's return if we agreed to give him a chit. A chit, we learned, was a certificate of satisfaction which the sahib gives to his servant when he quits his employ. A sort of reference. One of the bearers had come to us with a beauty. It said:

To Whom It May Concern:

The holder of this chit is Tagool Moorda. He has been with me ten years, and I know from experience that he is capable of anything. Yes, anything.

Our boys saw the humor in the situation and gave the rascal a job anyway.

While we were looking over this young man Sakoor went on to explain that the chit would have to be signed by all the officers in the barracks. Armed with such a chit, it seemed as if the young man could get a job at any American post thereafter. Since we were reduced to desperation, we readily agreed to the chit business.

Hrman, pronounced "Herman," might be any age between fourteen and eighteen. He was clumsy, gawky, and ungainly, and somehow he looked like a caricature of Sakoor. We never dared to ask Sakoor if he were any relation for fear

of insulting the old boy. And anyway, from Sakoor's attitude to the youth, we gathered he was not. Johnny promptly dubbed Hrman, Hoiman Sahib; and Hoiman Sahib he was from then on.

Hoiman Sahib had a puckish glint in his eye; but beyond that, his expression was that of a very bright moron. It seemed that he knew just two English words—"teek" and "baksheesh"; but Hoiman Sahib struck us like snow upon the desert's dusty face; so we had to be content. By some stroke of intuition he could tell hot water from cold; and by another shaft of sheer brilliance he managed to know what time to get us up in the morning. And, after a fashion, he could make beds. I say "after a fashion," because for some peculiar reason, after about an hour in one of Hoiman's beds you felt like a horse bogging down on a heap of debris. However, Hoiman Sahib's obvious feeble-mindedness was a source of merriment to us all. We surely howled when Johnny observed, "Hoiman Sahib sho is trahin' mahty ha'd to be a gemmun's gemmun. Sho' wish Ah could he'p the po' boy."

And then the Bengali boot wallah showed up; and we promptly forgot about Hoiman Sahib for the time being. All of us were down-at-heel and so, overripe for footgear. Gung Din, as the boys called him, showed us his wares and said:

"One pair sandals for my American friends is e-special price: thirty rupees."

Thirty rupees! Why, this was an outrageous price! The boys, out of respect for my training in psychology, asked me to go to work on the robber and whittle him down to our size. I drew Gung behind the barracks and went to work on him. I made a huge success of the job, too, and when Gung and I reappeared we were both grinning like Brahmins with

baksheesh; I, over my success in bringing him down, and he, no doubt, at having met so understanding a sahib.

"If we each buy a pair of sandals," I said, "Gung, here, will make us a special price of twenty-two rupees."

The boys tittered and cackled with glee over my shafting old Gung like that; they all ordered sandals on the spot, willingly agreeing to pay the two rupees extra for the buckles.

"How yo' all do it, Chaplun?" asked Johnny after the wallah had gone.

"Oh, it's very easy," I said modestly. "You see, most of you chaps use the wrong technique in dealing with these people. These Bengalis are a proud, intelligent, honest people. They don't appreciate being called thieves and robbers, which is what you imply when you tell them that their prices are too high. Now I go about it differently. I tell him his prices are fair; a little too low, in fact, for such high-grade merchandise. I marvel that he can make a living on such prices. Soon I have him believing that he's a philanthropist rather than a money-grubbing boot wallah. Then I explain that we Americans are really not rich at all. The notion that we have money to burn is a bit of Japanese propaganda to embarrass the Indians and us in our dealings. Finally, I ask him to recommend a boot wallah who can serve us at the price we can afford to pay, in this case, twenty rupees a pair. We compromised on twenty-two rupees. And there you are."

The boys complimented me on my astuteness and wished they had taken more psychology when they had had the chance.

The next day Gung showed up with the goods, which was strange, since we thought he would have to make them all to fit us. But he said he and his men had worked all night on them. He looked such a dejected picture of misery when we



paid him our twenty-four rupees each that none of us had the heart to take the one rupee change from the twenty-five rupees we gave him. We let him keep it for baksheesh. Even so, we began to feel as if we had come from Chicago's South Side. The Major was so conscious-stricken that he told me he was going to give something to the missions—after the war. He said he didn't like the idea of grinding the faces of the toiling masses of India into the dust; it smacked too much of the British. Most of the boys thought it would be a fine thing if they learned more missionary hymns.

And then Hoiman Sahib came back into our purview. He was wearing a pair of brand-new sandals exactly like ours. Secretly we all rushed to our rooms to check on ours to make sure he hadn't been helping himself. It was a futile thing for him to wear sandals, anyway. The soles of a wog's feet are tougher than the Marines. But there they were; bright and shiny with their brass buckles.

It was Johnny who started the interrogation.

"Hoiman Sahib, where yo' all git twenty-two rupees fo' them sandals?"

Hoiman grinned shyly. "Not twenty-two rupees, sahib; four rupees."

"What!" yelled the boys in chorus. "Four rupees!"

"Yes, sahibs. Four rupees. I pay Bengali wallah no more. Four rupees enough too much, sahibs."

"Where's that — Chaplain?" Willy shouted. "Psychologist, —! I told you he was a phony. From now on I'm taking my psychology lessons from Hoiman Sahib."

Discreetly I withdrew until a more favorable time.

When Babu got back the boys composed a chit for Hoiman Sahib. He brought it to me last for my signature, too. This is what he got:

## TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to certify that the bearer of this chit, Hoiman Sahib, is a person of superior comprehension and surpassing perspicacity. He has performed his duties as bearer to the undersigned in an unparalleled manner, and on occasion, he has shown surpassing wisdom. We recommend him highly, particularly to intellectuals.

Signed

MAJOR LEWIS STEDMAN, *Dope in Ordinary, U.S. Army*  
MAJOR JOHNNY JOHNSON, *Booby, 1st Class, Medical Corps*  
CAPTAIN ROY T. SCOTT, *Booby, 2nd Class, U.S. Army*  
CAPTAIN SUGAR ISON, *Plain Dope, U.S. Army*  
CAPTAIN BOB STUTZ, *Moron, Dental Corps*  
CAPTAIN NELSON WILSON, *Jackass, U.S. Army*

It was the most imposing chit a bearer ever got. I added my name at the bottom like this:

CHAPLAIN THOMAS H. CLARE, *Dunce Extraordinary, A.C.*

## THE CHAPLAIN'S WORK

FREQUENTLY the home folks write to me and ask, "What kind of work does the Chaplain do in a combat outfit?" This is a hard question to answer because it is so simple: Everything!

It is essential that the Chaplain understand the mentality of the men who go out and do the fighting—in our case, the bombing. He must participate in their tensions, fears, anxieties, and problems if he is to win their confidence and respect.

Sometimes in my rounds of the barracks, I come across men who are sick, or think they are sick, and who can't seem to get the proper attention from the medics. Whether a man is sick or merely thinks he's sick, it's all the same. The idea can get around quickly that the Army doesn't care a rap about you. Whenever I turn up such a case, I consult one of the docs confidentially. Sometimes these boys have to be handled more carefully than the G.I.'s; they like to think that the Chaplain is an ignoramus in medicine and should mind his own business. The essential point, though, is to get the idea over to the patient that he's a valuable element in the total structure no matter how lowly may be his rank. Not infrequently, I turn up a case of genuine illness which should have the attention of the medics. The man may have failed to report in on sick call for fear of being thought a gold-brick.

More often than not, though, my visits to the barracks turn up humor rather than pathos. Old Private G. I. can be depended upon to come through with humor in the face of every situation; and even his "bitching" is usually side-split-

ting. I recall one time when I was conferring with Mac, my clerk, in his barracks while the boys were sweating out the mail call. I tried to appear uninterested, but I had an ear cocked to what was being said. It went like this:

"One of the fellows on the line tells me it's the North African campaign," said Greenwald, helping himself to somebody's gin. "Tell me [*gulp*] they's using all planes over there to take the wounded home."

"That's a crock, if you ask me," grumbled Cue-Ball. "I ain't had a letter since Christmas. Figure that one."

"Sho sump'n wrong," said Mississippi. "Last tahm Ah gits a lettuh, it's Feb'y."

That prince of all morale builders, the letter from home, had let the boys down, and they were voicing their gloom and disgust. Part of it was due to our changing stations, no doubt. Perhaps the African campaign did have something to do with it. Whatever the cause, the mail wasn't coming through.

"When it does catch up to me," said Steve, "I'll need a five-day leave just to read it all. Just think," he sighed, "—my wife writes to me every day. That's what she claims. But do I get that many letters? —, no!"

"Yeah. Every day until that defense worker comes along," soothed Greenwald with a wink at the others.

"Ho, ho! That's a crock," grinned Steve. "Ain't no 4-F squirt going to beat my time."

"That's what *you* think?"

"Yeah?"

"Plane due today, men?" I called over, changing the subject slightly.

"Came in about an hour ago, Chaplain," said Cue-Ball. "We're sweating out the mail call now."

"Was there much mail on it, Cuban?"

"Fourteen sacks and six bags for the hospital. That's what Lefty told me. He drove the truck from the plane."

"There were six nurses due on that plane, too. For our new hospital," I said thoughtfully.

"Yeah. Lefty looks 'em over. 'Six bags for the hospital' is still the way he put it."

The laughter was general.

It turned out to be one of those days; everybody hit the jackpot. Each man there got at least a half-dozen letters. They all lapsed into a deep silence as they settled back to find out what the news from home was. Save for a few oaths, there was silence for a half-hour or so.

Steve was through first. He lay back on his bunk with his hands behind his head and gazed at the roof. His expression was anything but cheerful. Greenwald looked rather glum, too, but he still had a few to go. From the expressions in general I would say that the sugar report was unfavorable.

"Well, Steve," began Mac, "now you'll be happy for another week."

"—, no!"

"You mean that defense worker got—"

"Defense worker, nothing! My wife bought a house. —! Wait till I get my mits on that real estate agent. He'll wish—"

"Wait a minute, Steve," broke in Peeler. "A house is a good investment, I says."

"Not if you know my wife, it ain't."

"Why not?"

"Why not! When it comes to buying anything, she's positively brainless. I only hope they haven't sold her the park bandstand. They could have easy enough. She wouldn't know the difference."

"What she put up for it?" asked Greenwald, folding his last letter.

"Wish t' — I knew."

"Didn't she say?"

"Oh, sure she did. That's just it. But she said three different prices. In the first letter she says, let's see, here it is:

"The house I told you about, Honey—I did tell you, didn't I?—is darling. Of course, it's rather small, but we can add to it or sell it and buy a bigger one when you come home. With the lot, the price came to \$4,200. Cheap enough, don't you think? And built since 1920."

"That's not so bad for a house, Steve," said Cue-Ball. "Lots of houses cost more'n 'at."

"But it ain't \$4,200!"

"Why, you just said—"

"Yeah. But in the next letter she says it cost \$4,400. And in the last one she talks about \$4,600. That makes \$200 a letter the price goes up. I'll be afraid to open the next I get. She'll be in the five thousands and going up. —!"

The boys all laughed at the gloom on his generally cheerful map. "There goes my dough," he moaned.

"You're still way ahead compared to me." Greenwald's voice had the tone of deep philosophical sorrow. We all turned around.

"What she do—buy another car?" No one believed she had, of course.

"That's zac'ly what she done." Greenwald was leaning over with one hand cupped under his chin. His wife was a bit of a problem, it seemed. "Now we got *three* cars sittin' in the driveway. 'Investment,' she says. Oh, well, I should worry! I only make the — money." Complete resignation measured his tones.

The boys howled louder and longer at him; his expression was hopeless.

"Who she buy this one from—her father?" asked Cue-Ball.

"Her mother. That — bunch threw the hooks into me soon's I left. First, that half-wit brother of hers sells her his car when he's drafted. For seven hundred dollars, too. That nearly kilt me when I hears it. Now her mother goes and gets her a job in a defense plant out of town and my wife buys her Dodge coupé for six-fifty. —!"

After we calmed him down a bit, Steve tried to console him:

"Look, pappy! After the war there'll be a big demand for cars. You'll be sittin' pretty."

"For *cars*, yes. But what do you think these chariots will be, sittin' out there in the weather and with the neighbors' kids climbing over 'em for a couple of years? Three nice piles of rusty iron. Boy, oh, boy! If I could only be home for one day! Just twenty-four hours!" After a brief silence he continued: "An' that jalopy of my brother-in-law's, it wasn't worth the paint that held the door handles on."

Soon the boys were suggesting all kinds of crazy things that their wives might do with their money while they were away. Peeler got quite frightened and knocked his gin over when he heard some of the possibilities. He hadn't said much this evening. That started everybody grinning over the whole thing, and soon spirits began to rise again. In a very short time the old camaraderie had returned.

"Long as I get my mail," said Steve finally, "she can do what she — pleases with the dough."

"Yeah, me too, I guess," said Greenwald. "Money won't be no use after the war nohow. So what!"

"Yeah, *men!*!" thumped Cue-Ball. "Let's get the mail. We can always get more dough."

"Sho do," puffed Mississippi through a cloud of smoke.

And I think those are the real sentiments of the boys out

here. The money doesn't matter except as an excuse to complain about it. But the mail does matter. And it matters to people on both sides of the ocean, as we learned from Shotwell's reactions. Hot Shot hadn't said a word all this time; he just sat and looked and muttered.

"Censor get on you again, Hot Shot?" asked Steve with his usual cheer.

"Sure did. My sis writes that they chopped up my letter again so's she can't make head or tail out of it. Them bas— Oh, scuse me, Chaplain. An' —, I don't say nothin'."

"So we've all noticed," answered Cue-Ball.

"I mean nothin' about the war or the planes or the Japs or—"

"Now don't give us any more of that stuff. They don't chop up your letters for nothin'. Could be they think you got a code in them letters. Maybe what you write gives them that idea," suggested Greenwald. "You know censors is all dumb."

"Could be. But I write plain facts about life around here which got nothin' to do with no code," said Hot Shot morosely.

"Plain facts about India? There's your trouble right there! You know we got an agreement with the British not to tell things about India," Steve pointed out patiently. "Boy, I leave that stuff alone."

"Then I might as well tear up this stuff which I wrote today," said Shotwell resignedly.

"Maybe not. Wait! Let's see it. If it's to your sister you don't give a —."

Hot Shot fished his letter out from a cardboard box in which he kept his paper and envelopes. "O.K. Read it. See if there's anything in that to scare a lame-brain like that censor."



Steve took the letter and read aloud; it was a lengthy thing, too:

DEAR SIS:

The gang in Cal. tells me that they are going to send you some silver for your wedding. That's nice. I will kick in, too. Also I will pick up some curious nick-nack here in India for you which you will be proud of on account nobody else in town has got one. I did buy a pair of jet black ivory elephants with pink feet and blue ears and red tails for you, but they are over three feet high and so they are too big for book ends except for Montgomery Ward's catalog which, as I remember correctly, you don't keep in the living room.

The other day I bought a nice buffalo skin which I could of sent you for a rug. It was perfect except for two small holes as big as a table cloth in the back of it. The hair doesn't come out of it much either. Perhaps I will send you an old oxcart I picked up cheap the other day, and which is intact except for the wheels and the shafts which Pete could easy make for you again. It would look good on the lawn. Rustic stuff. Get it? It's pretty heavy, though.

Another curio which I picked up with you in mind is a two-seater camel saddle. You can have it if you want it. You can use it sideways on two horses. It will make a swell wedding present as it will be the only one in town. Or you can have the two loin-cloths which Gandhi used to wear and which I won on a poker game with Greenwald. You and hubby can wear them as swimming suits when you go to the beach. They don't look bad at all and got pictures of the Taj Mahal on them.

And now you want to hear about India. I can't tell you much because of these censors which got no brains. To start with, the people are all colors, black, brown, yellow, and white and green. Depending upon which part of the country you come from. Our boys are the green ones. All colors of people wear something on them except when they're naked. The blackest ones are always naked except for a shirt, a pair of pants, and

sandals. It is nothing to see these black people walking down the street bare-headed with just a turban on.

These people over here never sing or dance except on festival days which come twice a week in the evenings. And when they talk to us they are always trying to babble something or other. Very queer people, see. I've never seen them eat anything except a little food, and it's the hardest thing to get them to drink anything. Unlike us, they only drink when they are thirsty, and then only liquids and juice.

They rarely go to bed at night, being content to lie around on mattresses and cover themselves with bedclothes. How the poor devils exist is a mystery to us, for it seems that they only work when they have jobs, and they don't get jobs until they are five years old, and they have to quit when they're eighty. Even at that the jobs are not very steady; for they rarely get in more than 360 days per year.

What interests our boys most about these people over here are the babies. It seems the women produce them. Yes! Can you imagine? The men have very little to do with it somehow. The Indians put it this way: "Na jhar on pan ni comal," which is like saying, "Papa may be present for the laying of the keel, but not for the launching." Now it seems that the babies, even baby girls, are naked when they are born, which the missionaries think is very immoral, and they are taking steps to correct the evil. It surely is a problem, I can tell you.

All the natives love the white folks in some way. They love the presence of the British when they're absent; and they love the absence of the Americans when they are present. It's good to feel you are loved.

Contrary to public opinion back there, these people are not religious at all because they have no gods except Siva, Deva, Neva and Eva. The Baptists are doing all they can to give them Jesa to boot.

When we came here first the women working on the runways wore only G strings. Now they wear brassieres as well.

We issued them. Can you beat that? G.I. bra's! It was good for morale, though. The only trouble is that these gals can't read the instructions on how to wear them, so they asks Chick Peeler who knows a little Wog talk, but not much. Chick gets mixed up himself and tells them "Low down and back to front" instead of "High up and in front." It was a mistake on Chick's part, but now the girls won't . . .

The boys looked at one another blankly.

"You been sendin' tripe like this home and expect to get away with it?" asked Steve incredulously. "Why, you — fool, the folks back home will think we're all gone nuts!"

"You mean we ain't?" Hot Shot was equally incredulous.

Right then I could see there was method in his madness. Shotwell will be back in Uncle Sugar before any of them.

But the Chaplain does more than visit the barracks. Sometimes two officers will get into an altercation over some trifle, and the ill feeling, if untreated, may spread to the men of the outfits represented by the officers. In such cases it's my job to act as mediator in as subtle a manner as possible. I recall one time when our S-4 refused to pay a bill incurred by Sibley, our mess officer, for necessary repairs. Since the health of the men was at stake, Sib went ahead and had the work done at once, ignoring all the red tape just as he should have done. Since the S-4 had not been consulted on the matter, he refused to O.K. payment for the work. Technically, he was correct; but when there's a war on there is no place for technicalities—the job must be done fast. And that boy Sibley (of Knickerbocker Hotel fame) was a fast worker (in a lot of ways, I found out) if there ever was one. He and the S-4 exchanged backhanded courtesies over the matter with rising emphasis. I patched up the affair by having Sibley, who was adjudged in the right by general consensus,

apologize to the S-4. The man in the wrong psychologically can least afford to make the first advance.

Sometimes the Chaplain serves as adviser and confidant to his C.O. He may be called upon to make a confidential investigation, or he may be asked to suggest a man for a particular job, since often the Chaplain knows the men better than anyone else. One time we had a captain who acted in the capacity of an ornament on the post, and not a very good one. The C.O. wanted to get him pigeonholed somewhere so that more efficient junior officers could be assigned to the important jobs.

"What the heck can I do with Captain X, Chaplain? He's unattached right now and should go into Operations, only Lieutenant A is a better man for the job."

"We have no PX officer right now," I answered. "Make him PX officer."

"I can't make a captain a PX officer, Chaplain—not with all these second lieuts lying around."

"Why not? Call him in and blow up about the state of the PX. Then ask him to take over and straighten the mess out before you assign a junior officer to the job. Just let Captain X keep it."

Captain X made a darned swell PX officer. Nor did he want to give the job up.

Or it may happen that promotions do not come through as quickly as the men think they ought. I look into those cases and make recommendations, directly to the Exec or C.O., or, in rare cases, to my supervising Chaplain at G.H.Q., who usually has a good drag with the powers that be.

Perhaps the Red Cross staff can't dig up enough girls for the enlisted men's dance. In desperation they come to Chaplain about it. I positively shine at that kind of assignment despite my natural backwardness and shyness where the

opposite sex is concerned. Or perhaps some of the men want a concert of "long-hair" music: I round up the records for them.

And the Chaplain writes letters—stacks of them. Sometimes a G.I. will hit a streak of moroseness and refuse to write home, like Mike Mallich. Mike's mother was a Chetnik and an admirer and supporter of General Mihailovitch of Yugoslavia. Mike's girl friend was for the Marshal Tito faction. Mike's mother swung Mike's girl around by the hair and called her a fifth columnist. Mike was very unhappy about it and refused to write to his mother any more. His mother was quite upset about Mike's unreasonableness and wrote to me about it.

"Mam shouldn't done that," said Mike. "I should marry a girl without hair, huh?"

It was no use arguing with Mike; he was adamant. So I asked him to tell about his mother.

"Six feet three; weighs two-sixty; and can bust a man's skull like bustin' a grape," said Mike with a note of admiration in his voice. So Mike was going to be easy meat; it would just take a little time to get him to talk his way into a renewed love for the old lady.

"How did you come to be in the army, Mike? Drafted?"

"No, sir! Enlisted. Ran away and enlisted." He grinned at the memory of it. "And when Mam found out I was at Camp Perry, she come right up to take me back home." Mike, who is six feet two and weighs two hundred and thirty pounds, paused to laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha! She seen me in this here line being drilled by a buck sergeant what thinks he's tough, and up she comes. Ho, ho! I'm ready to take off and beat it when this dumb buck steps in her way and says, 'Madam, you can't—' He didn't get no further. Ho, ho! She nearly beat his brains in

before they pull her off him. 'I want my boy!' she cries. But I'm off for the woods. Ho, ho!"

By the end of the month Mike had told me so much about his mother and her exploits and feats of strength that he was all puffed up with pride about her. He was easy for my suggestion that he drop her a line and see if she's still so tough.

Dozens of letters come in: "How is my boy doing? He has never been so far away from home before; so keep an eye on him and let me know." Or: "See that he goes to church every Sunday like he did at home." Or: "Is my boy getting any bad habits? He always was a good boy at home and thought the world of his mother; so talk to him."

More difficult for the Chaplain to answer are the letters which go like this: "Will you find out why my allotment has been stopped? We have a baby now, and we both need the money badly." Usually, the man had lost his stripes for some bit of foolhardiness, and his wife and child are the innocent victims. After the deed is done, these men evince great solicitude for the wives and babies. "They can't do this to me," they say. "My wife and kids need the money too bad." But if a man doesn't behave himself, the Army can and will take away his stripes. Fortunately, most men think of their wives and children *before* they decide to play the fool. So they seldom play it. We have very few cases of trouble with the men considering the fact that they're all thrown together without any of the restraints that keep them on the straight and narrow back home.

The letters every chaplain hates to write are those to the parents of men killed in action. Some if not all of these men come from fine homes and families, like the Dickinsons, the Harrises, and the Van Horns. Their letters back to me reveal the true heart of America. I only hope that if ever I am faced with the terrible blow that confronts these people, I shall

react as courageously and with such faith and composure. Oh, yes, once in a while a distracted mother will write:

Please, Chaplain Clare, send me my son's body as quickly as possible. They had room on the ship to take him over there, so they must have room for just one body. I want him here, I must have him or I'll go . . .

And here's a fragment from the wife of a young pilot who was my personal friend:

Thank you for your letter, Chaplain, but John will come back! You see, Chaplain, there are two of us depending on him now.

Whenever possible, I used to send the parents or wives pictures of the graves. Of all the things I said or did, they appreciated this little favor most of all. It was a bit of visible proof that their loved ones had been properly taken care of. But the War Department put a stop to all that. It came under "giving away vital information to the enemy."

On rare occasions, the Chaplain might be sent out to investigate a plane crash and to bury whatever bodies were found. I was assigned to a task of this nature when we lost Merry and his crew. Lieutenant Merry had flown his own bomber over from the States. He was considered to be a reliable pilot in every way. On this particular day he went out with the outfit on a mission over Burma. Twenty minutes out from our base they ran into soup, and when they emerged from it, Merry's plane was missing from the formation. The assumption was that he had run into engine trouble and turned back.

Merry never reached his target, nor did he turn back. Captain Long and I found the plane about sixty miles away some three weeks later. We had to walk seven miles in through rice

paddies and jungles to reach it in the height of the Bengal summer. We saw evidences of the crash long before we reached the plane; for parts of that ship were scattered over an area a half-mile square. There was no evidence of an attempted crash landing; the plane had nosed straight in out of control and all the bombs had gone off upon the impact. We looked down into a crater twenty-five feet deep and forty feet wide. About a hundred yards away a head had landed; the burnt black hair was still on the ground. What was left of the bodies had been buried on the banks of a small river near the village of Gazaria.

It nearly drove me insane to read Merry's mother's letter. What a brick she is! I'd love to meet her some day. I'll make it my business if ever I get to Washington, D.C., again.

Upon occasion the Chaplain has to deal with men who develop psychoneurotic tendencies. Such men will be noticed by the chaps who live with them. The Chaplain is invariably the first to be called in on the case. If he has any sense, he calls in the medics right away, even if he does decide to treat the case himself. And sometimes the medics call in the Chaplain to do a bit of psychiatry for them. The Army doctor is usually a pretty shrewd chap and he generally has a good inventory of his resources. Take the case of Bissel.

Bissel and his crew went on a "sea sweep" in the Gulf of Tonkin, and in the action which followed, Marron, the copilot, got shot in the leg with a small-caliber bullet. It seemed to be nothing serious at the time, but soon the seat was covered with blood, and Marron knew that something serious had happened. He bled to death from a severed artery.

Soon afterward, Bissel developed neurotic tendencies. He couldn't sleep well, and when he did fall asleep he would wake up screaming from the terrible nightmares which tormented him. The Doc called me in about it.



"You haven't told the whole story of the death of Marron, Mike," I said to him when I saw him in my office. "What are you keeping back?"

He looked at the floor a long time without answering; so I proceeded to tell him what he hadn't told upon his return from the mission. And what he hadn't told was on his conscience to such an extent that he was developing a guilt complex. When I had done talking, he looked up and said:

"You hit the nail on the head, Chaplain."

Thereafter, Bissel's case responded to treatment quite readily. He was in no way to blame for Marron's death. It had never occurred to him that, had he made a different decision, the entire crew would have been lost instead of one man.

Many such cases adorn my records. Two of them make interesting telling because of their eventual outcome. The first of these goes in my records under the title of "The Fighting Finn"—not that Mennonnen did so very much fighting.

I never like to be present when a new man meets his C.O. for the first time. I fancy that somehow he thinks he is being publicly classified, and so, humiliated. Therefore I stepped quickly through the door and waited in the outer office, where I could hear, if not see.

"Private Mennonnen reporting in from Karachi!"

Captain Ruckett continued his writing without looking up.

"Private Mennonnen reporting in from Karachi."

Ruckett looked up sharply: "Say that again!"

"Private Mennonnen reporting in from Karachi."

"Don't yo'-all know how to address yo' commandin' officuh? Or any othuh officuh?"

Silence.

"'Suh'! An' salute when yo' talk to me. Now, pop to an' let's heah what yo'-all have to say fo' yo'se'f."

Captain Ruckett's eyes wandered to the service record which the First Sergeant had spread upon his desk for his convenience.

"Ah see heah yo'-all got a record fo' yo'se'f. Now pop to and let's heah what yo'-all got to say."

"Ay knew it. Ay knew it!" Private Mennonnen's tone betrayed bitter confirmation of a theory, coupled with supreme exasperation.

"Pop to!" roared Ruckett.

The big Finn just smiled sardonically. "Anoder wet-nosed kit trying to show his authority. All dey want to do is to ride me." He spoke to no one in particular; was just thinking out loud. "And Cheneral Grady dolt me I'd be given a decent chob to do," he continued bitterly, "ant now I got another wet-nosed kit wid bars on his shoulders. And t'inks he's a cheneral."

Ruckett jumped to his feet. "Shut up and pop to!" he shouted. "Ah'll have yo'-all th'own into the gua'dhouse."

The Finn looked straight ahead with unseeing eyes. He was bitter, but he was deadly calm.

"Dis is de ent now. Tomorrow Ay write to de Presitent. Ay'm going to get chustice. All Ay been in de Army is a tiscipline guinea pik for wet-nosed kits. Now Ay'm t'rough. Dey can't hurt me no more. Ay'm t'rough!"

"Will yo'-all shut up and pop to!" roared Ruckett once more. "A' yo'-all gwine to obey mah orduh, or must Ah have yo'-all th'own into the gua'dhouse?"

The Finn came back to reality with a rush: "Ay'm not obeying you nor any oder of dese tamn officers till dey learn to treat me like a man. Ay don'd have to take anyt'ing from you. Ay'll write to de Presitent. Now Ay'm t'rough!"

My presence, even in the outer office, was going to be embarrassing while these two continued to exchange pleasantries; so I withdrew discreetly. I wondered, as I went my way, how they were going to get him to the guardhouse if he chose to resist. He was huge. And he was all muscle and bone. And it was trained down to a fine point. There's one M.P. detail I want no part of, I mused.

Although Ruckett was a friend of mine, my sympathies went out to the big Finn who had come to believe that he was being made a target for poor disciplinarians. Somehow, I couldn't help thinking that a sense of humor on Ruckett's part would have led to an avoidance of the situation. If a service record has a couple of bad spots on it, it arouses that "once a thief, always a thief" mind-set in an officer. If Ruck had ignored the situation, if he had overlooked that failure to say "sir" and to salute . . . I began to reason. But there, officers are not supposed to ignore such things, even in a conscript army. Again I enumerated the fallacies I thought I had detected in the fundamental assumptions of army discipline. Basically, it was the failure to recognize that the ground of discipline must be different for a group of men who freely volunteer from that for a group of conscripts. Oh, well! Why bother with all that now? My arguments were only a Canute sitting before the tides, and anyway, I was only an "academic dreamer" when it came to such matters. It really was strange how quickly one became an academic dreamer. Here I was, the product of years of work in mines and factories, before ever I saw a college classroom; and when I proposed a suggestion based on that experience, I became automatically an "academic dreamer"! I wondered how many of these boys with bars on their shoulders had ever had a chance to handle men in the rough before they came into the army. I wondered how many of them, as they

paraded through the cadet schools, realized that discipline was a means to an end and not an end in itself. In short, I wondered how many of them became so hopelessly stereotyped that a sudden change in conditions could find them still using techniques in dealing with men which had failed time and again. They were taught to fit themselves into new conditions on the battlefield, of course; but in dealing with men, the system seemed too often to be inexorable and inflexible. The basic assumption seemed to be that men would always act alike and in the same manner, and that no conditions could ever arise to make them act differently. Conditions, it seemed, were believed to change without a corresponding change in men.

The post was soon ablaze with the Ruckett-Mennonnen fracas. Ruck was popular with everybody, enlisted men and officers alike; but there was a feeling that he had shown poor control in losing his temper with an enlisted man. Evidently Ruck was out for blood; he went to the Post Commander with the matter, and demanded a general court-martial. We were at war, and the cantankerous Finn might get himself shot if he wasn't careful. I decided to drop in at the guardhouse on the pretext of making a routine call.

Steve, the Provost Marshal, a lad from southern Illinois, and one swell Joe, was at his desk mopping streams of perspiration from his face.

"Hi, Steve!" I hailed him. "Having any trouble keeping warm?"

"Not too much, Chaplain. I'll be all right after I get the stove and fur-lined snuggies I just requisitioned. Come on in and have a cold drink. Bearer! *Tanda pani lau!*" he yelled through the door.

"Guardhouse still empty?" I asked innocently between sips.

"Yeah. Except for a couple of Wogs we caught snooping around. No. Wait! We've got a prisoner. Came in about an hour ago."

"You mean a G.I.?" I feigned incredulity.

"Yeah, that's right."

"Ha! What in the world has he done; swiped the liquor from the Officers' Club again? That's still the only guard-house crime in the Air Corps, isn't it?"

"Just about." Steve grinned.

I sat under the native fan, and joined Steve in face-moping. "Who is this man, Steve: one of our old men again?"

"No, Chaplain. He's a new man just in from Karachi. And it's a funny thing: I ran into this same guy in Scott Field a year and a half ago. He was a raw recruit then. I was a staff sergeant, and this guy was in my outfit. But he soon washed out. Too stubborn. Then one day we had a court-martial on him for insubordination and for threatening physical violence to an officer. He got one year in the brig and a dishonorable discharge."

"Hm! Sounds bad, all right. What's the story? Do you recall any of the details?"

"Not much, Chaplain. As I remember it, he was sweating it out in the chow line when this major came along and pushed past him into the Mess. Mennonnen grabbed him by the scruff of the neck and gave him the old heave-ho. He claimed he didn't know he was a major. Ha, ha! But that was eyewash, because when the major started dressing him down, this Finn told him to run along and polish his brass. If the G.I.'s hadn't laughed, I guess the major would have put it down to ignorance."

"Oh, sure," I said. "We've got to protect the old ego, or the Army won't amount to a thing, will it? But how did he get over here if he got a year and a D.D.?"

"Search me. But his service record shows three convictions for the same thing. So he really is a bad actor; sees red when an officer talks to him."

"This must be the man they're talking about all over the camp," I said. "Did he really meet General Grady? That's the rumor I heard."

"That part of his tale is correct, Chaplain. Grady it was who sent him to us saying he was a useful man and we should put him to work. As I get it, he said the Old Man would know what to do with him. Guess the Old Man will Section-Eight him.\* Why don't you have a talk with him, Chaplain, and see what you make of him?"

"Believe I will, Steve."

The guard opened the door to let me in, and stayed not too far away in case of trouble. The Finn was lying on his bunk with a smile of utter peace on his babylike face. I walked up and thumped his magnificent chest.

"Where'd you get that, soldier?"

"Oh, hello, Chaplain. And how do you feel today?"

"Fine, thanks. And you?"

"Oh, Ay'm all right. It isn't me; it's dem — fools out dere dat needs your attention, Chaplain." The big boy grinned as if what he said was a secret between us both.

"What's your name, soldier?"

"Mennonnen. If de — fools will leave me alone and let me work, Ay'll be all right. Ay choint de army; Ay wasn't trafted. Ay choint to fight de Chaps. And what do dey do? Kee-eeep me in de guardhouse all de time. Ay ain't no good in de guardhouse."

The Finn's cheerfulness was beginning to break down as he neared the subject of his imprisonment; so I interrupted him.

\* Classify him as mentally and emotionally unfit.

"Where are you from, Mennonnen?"

"Ay'm from Minnesota. Where are you from?"

"God's acres: southern California."

"Dere's no snow down dere." The Finn looked at me with sympathy.

"No, there's no snow. But how do you know? Have you been there?"

"Until Ay choint de army Ay never been from Minnesota. Ay was boss of a railroad section gang in a lumber camp. Good chob. Me, Ay know how to hantle men."

The way he looked me over when he said that last "men" made me squirm. I was beginning to suspect that this giant's trouble with his officers stemmed from his standards. A man in his estimation was at least six feet and weighed two hundred and twenty pounds stripped. "Wet-nosed kits" wasn't so much a term of disrespect as it was an honest attempt at classification. No doubt many of the officers who had racked him back weighed less than a hundred and fifty pounds and were under five feet eight. No doubt, in the Finn's scheme of things, an officer must first be a man—his kind of man. An officer whose skull he could crush with one blow was an inversion of all his values.

"How do you like army life?" I asked foolishly, not knowing what else to say.

The Finn smiled tolerantly. "When dit Ay have a chance to find out? Ay been in de brig all de time. Chust because I do one stretch for not knowing an officer, de next guy looks at my service record. 'A bad actor,' he says, and den dey watch out for me."

His smile disappeared, and he jumped to his feet. "But Ay'm t'rough! Direct to de Presitent Ay'm going to write. And tell him what dey are doing to me, a man who enlisted to fight de Chaps. Ay'm t'rough, and dey can't stop me!"

He was getting hot; so I decided to head him off a bit. "How did you like General Grady?"

"A fine man. A fine soldier wid sense. A chenuine first-class cheneral."

"And how did you come to meet him?"

"Ay was in prison down dere, and he came t'rough on inspection. He went everywhere, you know dat. And he got his eyes open. Ay went up to him. Dey tried to stop me, but he said, 'Attention! Let dis man speak.' So Ay tolt him de whole story."

"And what did the general say?"

"He said, 'See dat dis man is sent back to his quarters at once!' And den he tolt me to come and see him dat afternoon. When Ay went dere he tolt me he was giving me a chance to make good and sending me up here where Ay coult be of use. But here Ay am, back in de brig." He got to his feet and pounded a huge fist into his palm: "And now Ay write to de Presitent."

I was getting a little uneasy in the presence of this seething mass of rock-pile brawn. I shook his hand and patted his shoulder, much as a child pats a horse; then I left, assuring him that the whole thing could be straightened out. But he wasn't interested, being as he said, "t'rough." He did apologize, though, for any rudeness he might have shown me, and I was relieved to know I was not on his "list." I left before he could think to pat me kindly on the head and tell me to run along.

Once outside, I took stock of the situation. I've met dozens of screw balls in the Army, and along with my brother Stanley, I have something of that reputation myself in our home town; so I know when to discount a yarn and when to believe one. All I could conclude about Mennonnen was that his story was essentially true, and that his analysis of his



own predicament was more or less correct. His service record, the G.I.'s best friend and worst enemy, had followed him as the Erinyes of Æschylus follow the bad actor throughout life. Each C.O. in turn had been surcharged with a big presumption of trouble to come, by a mere glance at the Finn's service record. And the trouble came. Mennonnen's patience had snapped, and now, here he was, all set to write to the President of the United States about it. In his simple faith, a new Lincoln sat in the White House who would rise in righteous wrath and call to account the tormentors of a man who had in good faith enlisted to fight for his country, even this lonely childlike giant. No wonder he was at peace with himself. He had given these "fools" every chance. He had borne with them patiently, and even suffered hard labor in prison. The General's intervention had made no difference. So: "Dis is de ent." The President would have to know about it, that was all.

It would have been pathetic but for the fact that his faith fitted the facts. It would have been pathetic had he been a German soldier, or a Japanese, or an Italian. But this lad was out to get "chustice," and what was more, he knew he would succeed, the more so if he took it to the White House.

About one thing I was sure: There would be no court-martial if I could help it. I began to formulate plans to have the Finn turned over to me for observation or study. Anything to get him away from the "wet-nosed kits." With this in mind, I hurried over to see the C.O. before anything drastic was done. But the Old Man had just left to take care of this insubordination case, the Adjutant said. The Colonel belonged to the "do-it-now" school. "Chaplain," added Willy, the Adjutant, "this is no business for you. They should turn him over to me. I'd take that big square-head into the bushes and beat some sense into him."

Willy was a husky lad with all the confidence in the world in his own physical powers. He breathed more fire than anybody in the outfit; but it was purely ceremonial. He was also the "soft-heartedest" chap in the outfit. I nearly burst out laughing in his face. The Finn would have had him crying like a baby in five minutes. But I kept up the pretense of toughness right along with him. I looked Willy over severely.

"Have you met him?" I asked.

"Not yet. But I'm going to. And he better not act up with me. I'll take these bars off and beat some sense into him like I done to old Suggsy in the Seventh Bomb, when I was First Sergeant."

"Willy, for heaven's sake, don't let this guy hear you talk like that," I warned—intending, of course, to urge him to more of it.

"Oh, no! And why not?"

"Because this lad will push you down into your shoes and pull you out through the lace holes, bars and all."

And I was gone before I could catch his fire-breathing retort.

I had meant well, anyway. Too bad I had missed the Colonel, though. Now the Finn's goose was cooked; he would doubtless talk his way into a court-martial for sure. And, just as sure as a fireside chat, he'd get the works. All I could do now would be to steer the talk away from firing squads and in the direction of Section Eight. Glumly I made my way over to the brig to see how things were going and to help the Colonel back on his feet after Mennonnen threw him out through the walls. When I got there, the Colonel and the Exec were still in with the Finn; so I sat in Steve's office to sweat them out.

When they finally emerged, my fears disappeared like

the beer ration. Both of them were grinning in evident delight. Then I saw the light. In his decision to appeal to the President, the Finn's anger had been mostly dissipated, of course. And if he had convinced General Grady, why not the Colonel?

"You too, Brutus?" I greeted the Old Man as he came into Steve's office.

The Colonel looked puzzled for a moment and then tumbled.

"Oh, have you seen him, too, Chaplain?"

"He sold me on the spot, sir."

"Me, too. Ay'm t'rough; Ay'm on his side," mocked the Colonel. And we all grinned like a couple of kids.

"What have you in mind for him, sir?"

"I'll tell Steve to release him to headquarters barracks and to keep him out of the way of those wet-nose—ahem—the officers, until I can find a spot for him."

"You mean you're going to transfer him to headquarters squadron, sir?"

"Sure thing. Why, this guy is priceless, and he's different. Sincere, and as clean as a kid. It was his bad luck to begin his life in the army under some d— fool who was formerly a straw boss on the P.W.S. or something. Why, give that guy a pick and a shovel and pat him on the shoulder, and he'll dig his way to Japan singlehanded."

I smiled at his complete capitulation.

"Grady was absolutely right," continued the Old Man. "There must be a job somewhere for a man like that. And he's too rare to be pushed around by a bunch of wet—er—ahem—pushed around."

I promptly put the Colonel on my "pucka" list. Why can't they all have a sense of humor and of human dignity? I mused.

"And Captain Ruckett?" I inquired.

The Colonel looked around stealthily and grinned: "Is nothing but a wet-nosed kid," he quoted.

They found a spot for Mennonnen all right; a spot where no officers could molest him. He was turned over to Sergeant Emmons at the gas depot, unloading tank cars of gas and oil. He worked like a galley slave, cheerfully and willingly, and S-4 blessed the good fortune that dropped him in their lap. Once in a while they let him drive the big truck, and that made him supremely happy.

Left to himself, Menny, as we came to call him, rapidly won the respect and friendship of everybody. His slow, easy-going good nature was a tonic around the post. But he was not to be with us long; just long enough for him to find and establish himself.

One Sunday morning, about six weeks after he came to us, Menny's boss, Sergeant Emmons, went into the motor pit to start the pump motor. A seepage of gasoline had collected on the floor of the pit, but no one had noticed it. As he started the engine, she backfired through the carburetor. In a moment the pit was an inferno with Emmons screaming for help. The Finn didn't hesitate: with a headlong dive he was in through the trap after Emmons. When he emerged with the struggling, crazed Sergeant, he was burned black. Both of them were horribly burned.

They worked feverishly over them at the hospital, and both of them were conscious and able to recognize my whispered voice, although they could see nothing through those blackened eyes. They both apologized for having missed church that morning—as if that mattered so much. I whispered a prayer to each one, and felt like a heel while doing it. Those men knew more about praying than I'd ever learn.

Emmons died at two o'clock in the afternoon. The Finn

was still struggling to hold on, and for a while it seemed as if that mighty frame might yet survive an eighty-degree burn. When I visited him later that afternoon they were still trying feverishly to save him. The nurses had tears streaming down their faces, and the doctors couldn't trust themselves to speak. I ran my fingers through his blond hair, not knowing what else to do. He turned his face toward me, and his voice was just a whisper:

"Ay'll be all right, Chaplain. In t'ree weeks Ay'll be good enough to drive—the tr—"

The mighty Finn was dead.

With a lump in my throat I tried to break the news to the Colonel, who was waiting outside.

"—!" he said. "To think that they kept that man in the guardhouse for nine-tenths of his army life! The fools! The stupid, brainless—"

I turned away. It isn't good for a man to see his Commanding Officer break down.

The case of Baruch Gavell was another in which a bit of psychology saved a good man for good work.

Greenwald was in my office typing up my monthly report. Suddenly we saw a man come sailing out of the door of the dispensary across the way, just like a skip bomb. Since he didn't get up, I jumped up and ran out with Greenwald right behind me.

"Leave him there," yelled the Sergeant. "He ain't no good. Let him get his gun and start shootin'. We got a firin' squad for guys like him." The Sergeant banged the door as he went back into the dispensary.

"Come into my office. I want to talk to you, son," I said.

He was just a kid and limped as if he had a bad leg. When we were in the office, I motioned to Greenwald to move into

the other room; so he carried the typewriter with him and left.

The youngster fairly cried his eyes out; so for a long time I didn't say a thing—I just sat and pretended to read.

Finally he started talking.

"I guess I'm not much of a man to cry like this, sir."

"Everybody cries sometimes, son; especially if he has pride," I answered quietly.

"I got too much pride to let a gang of stupid morons like those guys push me around. The first chance I get to lay my hands on a Tommy gun I'll blast the whole — bunch off the map. That sergeant, too. They'll kill me, but I'll have the satisfaction of taking them with me."

"Pulling a trigger is a simple act," I said, "and very easy to do if there's hate in one's breast."

"I'll do it. I've had enough of what these guys call discipline."

"I think I know what you mean. Perhaps you'd better tell me about it."

"It won't do any good, sir. It's gone too far now."

"What's your name, Son?"

"Gavell. Private Baruch Gavell, sir."

"And your home?"

"Chicago, sir."

"Parents living?"

"Yes, sir. And a brother in the army. Fort Bliss, last I heard."

"Older or younger?"

"Older, sir."

"What did you do before you were drafted, Son?"

"I wasn't drafted!" he lashed out. "I enlisted."

"Then you must be under age. You are, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir!"

"How old are you, Son?"

"Eighteen now, sir. I was seventeen when I enlisted." Then he added, "I quit college to work in an auto factory that was making Browning automatic rifles. I was making more than fifty bucks a week."

I questioned him at length. It seems he joined the Army because all of his friends were in it, and he felt like a heel to be on the outside.

"Have you got a girl friend back home, Son?"

"Yes, sir. And that's another thing, sir. I'm no Kike or Jewish bastard like these guys call me. My girl friend is Gentile."

"Oh, so you're Jewish?"

"Yes, sir. And I'm as good as the next guy. And when I go I'm taking that sergeant with me. He can't call me what he did and get away with it."

He was bitter. And he meant it, too. As far as I could see, he was on the verge of paranoia; so I began to think and talk fast.

"Maybe you're right," I said to Gavell. "Maybe you ought to shoot these men. Perhaps you're entirely right in this whole matter."

"Huh?" said Gavell.

"I say, perhaps you ought to shoot these men."

"Yeah. It will give me some satisfaction, at least."

"Oh, no! It won't do that at all. I was merely thinking that it would be a good way to rid the world of a lot of no-goods if people like you were to shoot them. Of course, you'd face the firing squad for it, but—"

"Why wouldn't I get some satisfaction out of it, sir?"

"Because dead men can't feel anything. Not even satisfaction. When you're dead, you're dead. And that's that. Your thinking and feeling are all over for good. In fact, the

opposite would be true," I continued, "for, if you kill those you hate, your enemies will have all the comfort of knowing that they were right about you. Theirs will be the satisfaction of having everybody agree that you were a bad actor from the start and the world is better off without you. But that doesn't alter the fact that perhaps you ought to go through with this business."

"I don't care what people think about me after I'm gone, sir."

"Of course not. None of us does. But it's rather a dirty trick to play on those we leave behind, don't you think? And on the rest of the Jewish people," I added after a pause.

"A dirty trick on the Jews! Why, sir, if you hear how these guys talk about us, you wouldn't say it was a dirty trick on the Jews."

"Oh, sure. Talk. Talk. But just the same, your parents and all the rest of the Jews would live behind you to bear the shame and disgrace. You wouldn't know; you'd be safely out of it."

Gavell couldn't see the point for a while; so I went on to point out how many more people would be able to say, "Those — Jews!" and finally he began to catch on.

"What would you suggest, sir? I'll do anything within reason. I don't want those guys to think I was just shootin' off my mouth. I still want to get some of them, though. They're not going to get away with it. No, sir. Not with me."

"First of all," I said, "I want you to promise me you'll follow my advice to the letter."

"I won't make any promises. I still got to get those guys."

"Then I can do nothing for you, Son."

"All right. Suppose I promise?"

"No supposing at all. Either you promise, or you don't



promise. Now listen to me: I'm going out for a while. I'll be back in about ten minutes. In the meantime you decide whether you want to follow my advice or not. When I come back, if you're going to do as I suggest, just hold out your hand and we'll shake on it. If not, then just get up and leave. We'll still be friends. But remember, if we shake on it, there's no backing out. Is that clear?"

"I won't promise anything. I'm going to get even."

"Think it over. I'll be back in ten minutes."

On the way out I called to Greenwald to come with me.

"Think he'll do it, sir?" asked Greenwald as we went over to the PX for a coke.

"I think so, Greenwald. But he's a tough case now. If he shakes on it, though, he's in the bag."

"How you figure, sir?"

"Because, if he shakes hands, he will have made a definite commitment and performed a concrete symbolic act. The handshake will remind him and call him back to his promise if he feels like weakening. That's all."

"It's all Greek to me," said Greenwald, "but I figure you know what it's all about, sir."

Gavell hesitated a bit when I returned, just to save his face, but he shook on it.

"Good!" I said. "Now tell me what happened in the dispensary."

"I got a bad foot," said Gavell, "I've been on the sick book with it for a couple of days. When I went in there now, they told me to bathe it in Epsom salts. Well, the bucket they gave me was filthy, or so it looked to me. I kicked the — thing over and told them what I thought of them!"

"Is your foot open? Is the skin broken?"

"No, sir. It's just sprained or something; but it's swollen and painful."

"Then the condition of the bucket wasn't so important. Anyway, the solution is pretty rough on germs. Now, you go back to the dispensary and apologize!"

I thought Gavell would explode. He jumped as if he had been shot.

"Sir! I'll never apologize to those guys!" he screamed out.

"Are you a man of your word, or are you not?" I asked firmly.

"Well, all right," Gavell answered after a while. "But I know they'll throw me out again."

"Try it and see, Son."

Well, to make a long story short, in six weeks Gavell was in good with everybody, and a splendid soldier, too.

One afternoon several months later Greenwald brought me a clipping from the theater paper, *Sound Off*:

When this war is over, one of the unsung heroes will be Corp. Baruch Gavell. Gavell and his crew were loading three-hundred-pound bombs into a B-25, when someone noticed that the tail fuse of one of the bombs was smoking. Evidently, the safety wire had been pulled accidentally while loading. In forty-five seconds that bomb would go off. No one knew how many of those precious seconds had already ticked off. There was a general scramble for safety, although no one stood a ghost of a chance to get far enough away in what remained of the forty-five seconds.

That bomb never went off. While everyone else was frantically trying to do the impossible, one man remained to do the faintly possible. Feverishly he started unscrewing the fuse. Second after second ticked on. After what seemed an age, the fuse was free, and with a mighty heave Corp. Gavell hurled it into the air where it detonated harmlessly a split second later.

"Lefty, come back here and hand me another fuse—a good one this time!" was the grandest sound those men ever heard. . . .

Whatever the Chaplain's activities—lectures, hikes, classes for illiterates, or what not—they are all secondary to his religious program, which is his *raison d'être* in the first place, and which gives center and meaning to all his activities. In his religious program, the Chaplain may be called upon to cater to Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. For the Christian Chaplain, catering to the latter may involve difficulties sometimes. You can organize a service for them every Friday night, and even participate in it to the extent of delivering the homily as was my custom. But there come times when these men want the services of a man of their own faith. And it is the Chaplain's job to see that they get them. The best times, of course, are the great religious festivals and holidays which come in the Jewish calendar, particularly Pesach (Passover) and Rosh Hashana. The Jewish boy may evince no interest in religious services for months, but as soon as a favorite Jewish holiday draws near he begins to feel a sort of psychic nostalgia which should be satisfied.

Frequently I read that there has been a quickened interest in religion among men of the armed forces. I suppose it must be so, although, frankly, I've seen no evidence of it in my outfit. Maybe this is my fault. Anyway, the proportion who attend church services is no greater than it was among these same men back in civilian life. The men who go to church in the army are the men who used to go to church in civilian life. As usual, the Catholics are the best churchgoers, with the Protestants next, and the Jews last—perhaps because of the limited facilities available to them. Most of the chaplains to whom I've talked have confirmed these impressions regarding the trend in church attendance in the army. I can't help playing with the idea that most religious leaders *wish* there were a revival of interest in religion, and that, in the reports to the press, these wishes unconsciously become translated

into facts. This is understandable, of course, for what man does not look for a growth in the importance of his stock in trade? And it is a fixed belief among the clergy that in times of stress people always turn to religion.

It may be that church attendance in the infantry is better. It may be that the Air Corps man betrays significant personality differences. Some have contended that the Air Corps man is a more intelligent man, a more daring man, and a more devil-may-care personality in every way. I don't know. I do know, though, that the Air Corps man does like to think of himself as living on borrowed time. And they are generally cocky and confident and self-sufficient to a degree.

I've observed the personnel of my squadrons at close range. Night after night the combat men, enlisted men and officers, play poker recklessly and drink freely. Never have I met a more profane crowd, and I've been around a little. The officers think religion is something put out for the enlisted men; the combat enlisted men think it is strictly for the ground personnel.

The officers attend church far less regularly than the enlisted men and in much smaller proportion. Out of one of my squadrons only ten officers ever showed up in church despite the fact that I used every device to lure them. Some began to think and wonder if I was serious about trying to get them to church. The ones who spoke to me afterward seemed quite surprised that I should have gone to the trouble of interesting myself in their spiritual welfare.

Thomas was particularly astounded. His attitude was that, since I was an educated man, what I said about religion was not to be taken seriously—no educated man bothered about such things.

"Chaplain, you don't seriously think that this business of religion goes for intelligent people, do you?" He was in dead

earnest. "I've always thought of religion as something for the masses," he continued. "I know they've got to have something to hang on to because they haven't the sense to figure things out for themselves."

"Do you think you're self-sufficient, Tommy?" I asked.

"Yes, Chaplain, I do. I can honestly say that religion would be a waste of time for me. And I was reared in a parsonage."

"I think there are people like that," I answered. "I knew one once who claimed he was an atheist. But I also know he was one of the finest and kindest people I've ever known. He merely denied religion in name; but he had a double dose of it in action. And he was firm to the end. I watched him die of cancer. His last appeal to me was: 'Tom, don't let any priest come around and stick a crucifix in my hand when I slip into unconsciousness. They'll do that if you don't watch them, and then give out that you recanted on your deathbed.' I kept that lonely vigil for him out of respect for the man's courage. Of course, he was an exceptional case," I added.

"I think I'd be the very same way," said Tommy. And, just then, he meant it.

Tommy and I became fast friends over the matter, and he ended up by inviting me over for a discussion, which was what I had been pointing at. There were quite a few present that night, and afterward I learned that they had gathered with the intention of putting me on the spot by asking a lot of embarrassing questions concerning the Bible; at least, they thought they were embarrassing.

"Take this idea of God, now," Tommy began. "How can an intelligent chap like you or Phil Geary believe in the existence of an old man with whiskers floating on a cloud?"

"God isn't an old man with whiskers floating on anything, Tommy," I replied. "It is the name man has always given to his conception of the highest and finest he has thought and

known. And religion is the name for the beliefs and practices which go with that conception."

Tommy and his friends were like a lot of other young college-trained folk: their religious thinking was merely the negative aspect of extreme religious conservatism. I gave them a brief lecture on my position, which, I pointed out, will not be accepted by many of my fellow professionals. In substance, here is what I said:

"Why bother to fight over the Bible? We don't fight over the Iliad, do we? Why can't we take what is of value in the Bible without regard to its historicity, just as we take what is of value in the Iliad without committing ourselves to an acceptance of the truth of Greek mythology? If you can't accept the biblical cosmology, or even its theology, there still is much in it to enrich the lives of all.

"No one is antagonistic to Bulfinch's 'Age of Fable.' Then why be antagonistic to the Bible? Antagonism is an emotional attitude which in this case robs us of the finest in literature and folk psychology. We think we are widely cultured if we can quote the Psalms of Ashurbanipal, or if we have read the Gilgamesh Epic; but the much grander Psalms of the Old Testament arouse in us only antagonism, merely because we delude ourselves into thinking that to read them somehow commits us to an acceptance of the religious conceptions of a primitive Semitic tribe. Frankly, if I became an atheist tomorrow, that would not stop me from reading the story of the Prodigal Son, or the story of David and Nathan, or from appreciating the profound psychological insights embedded in the story of the Rape of Tamar. Nor would I deny myself my weekly reading of that classic bit of irony in which Jesus makes a smart lawyer admit that the man he hates most is his greatest friend. These things can stand on their own feet alongside any literature and tower above it.

"And I could still appreciate Jesus as a man, too, for few people have understood human nature as well as he. His message and philosophy is still fundamentally sound, and not even Freud has revealed the basis of the insecurity complex as well as he. His shrewdness and wisdom in handling tough situations should be a delight to any parliamentarian not too bigoted to see farther than his glasses. Nor would well bred people want to miss his lovely little mosaic on good manners (Luke 10).

"Negative attitudes toward the Bible only impoverish us even while we are deluding ourselves that they are a proclamation of our emancipation from the faith of our fathers; for if a man by these methods has to announce his freedom, then he is already a slave to Prejudice, Bigotry, and Ignorance: despots who can warp the spirit and distort the mind far more effectively than can Herr Goebbels.

"Jesus is not to blame for the mockery which people make of him in the name of religion. Think! Jesus himself never criticized the harlots and the winebibbers. Instead, he took them into his company, daring the gossip of the 'good' people, who, like the 'good' people of our day, didn't know what they were good for. Jesus tried to raise them all to his own sense of human dignity and worth (John 6). It takes no brains nor imagination to measure one's fellows with a set of readymade rules; but it does take brains and imagination and more, human love, to understand what is wrong with the other fellow and to plan a program for his redemption without even uttering one word of censure. The girl who was gawky and ungainly in my college days became a beautiful and intelligent creature not because of the fun the whole campus poked at her, but because one teacher, seeing her in a new dress, made the chance remark that she had the makings of grace and beauty. And she became what he saw in her.

"And when you think of criticism, it is merely a device, a verbal trick whereby we attempt to convince ourselves of our own superiority by calling attention to the imputed inferiority of others—in itself an admission, if not of inferiority, then of our inadequacy to deal with the problems of others constructively. Whether you call him man or God, this Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth, was a man of tremendous stature. So big, indeed, that most of the theologians haven't found him yet; nor will they until they learn to look inward and outward instead of upward and downward."

Do these boys think of religion when they get into tight spots? Some of them do; others do not. Let's take Tommy again.

Tommy's bosom pal was Porter. Porter was just as intelligent as Tommy, but he lacked Tommy's sparkle in discussion. Together they went after the Mytinge Bridge in Burma. On the way home they ran low on gas, and it looked as if they might not make it. Soon the left engine cut out, and Tommy feathered the prop, desperately husbanding what little gas they had left. They had lost altitude so rapidly that bailing out was impossible. Nine miles from home the second engine gave out. There were five men in that plane depending on Tommy's skill and judgment. He brought the plane down in a rice paddy which was not much bigger than a city block. As she landed, the plane hit a bank and broke in two, the front half jumping a wide, deep ditch. Apart from the jolt and the usual shake-up, not a man was hurt, although the plane was smashed to bits. It was a superb bit of work in a tight situation.

When Tommy came in I spoke to him about his sensations during those last anxious moments. "Did you pray?" I asked him.



"Here's one for the book, Chaplain: I was too darned busy in that plane to think about praying, but as we were coming down I did call Porter on the radio and say: 'Porter, this is it. If you want to do any praying, brother, do it now.' 'You pray,' he answered. 'I'm getting ready to jump.'"

It had all been a joke to Tommy and the men in that plane with him. They are not all like that, though, I can assure you. One time when Anderson was crossing the Hump, one of his engines quit: the worst possible place in the world for that sort of thing to happen. At least three of the crew told me that they prayed plenty until that plane was safely down.

The great lengths to which all officers go to give the Chaplain cooperation testify to the esteem in which they hold religion, though, even if they are rather lax in participating in it. And they all bring me clippings and jokes about the Chaplain and religion—which is another evidence that these things are not far from their minds. Speaking of jokes, the best one that came across my desk concerned a British chaplain who had just talked to his Bible class about the parable of the Ten Virgins. He ended by asking: "And now, men, which would you prefer, the five wise virgins with the lighted lamps, or the five foolish virgins in the dark?"

There is a sense in which our boys may be said to be religious in a negative way. They are always glad that they are *not* anything but Christians. It is India more than anything that has brought this attitude out, and particularly the seeming heartlessness of Indian funerary customs. In India when one dies, his body is hustled out with all speed and taken to the burning ghats. In Dacca we used to see the bodies hauled to the ghats slung on a pole and carried by two men who shouted, "Gods! Gods!" as they hurried along.

As far as I was able to find out, the children rate nothing more than being thrown into the river. The practice in Agra

was revolting. It made our boys heartily glad to be Christians.

We had spent a couple of hours at the Taj Mahal and were on our way back to the post when we came across a man carrying a dead child. We dropped in behind to see what was going to happen. The man made for the river Jumna, just behind the Taj. The stench of the place was unbearable, and some of the men turned back because they couldn't stand it. At the bank of the river the man laid his burden down, tied a sinker to it, and heaved it into the water. Immediately several huge black turtles rose and began tearing the little body to pieces in full view of us. And then we saw the legs of the child kick convulsively. Either the child was not yet quite dead, or it was so recently dead that nervous reaction was still possible. We hurried away in disgust.

This display of heartlessness embittered our men against the Indians for a long time after that, and won many sympathizers for the British. That such a thing could happen within sight of the glorious Taj Mahal increased our disgust. Such callousness in the treatment of the remains of their loved ones stamped the Hindus as a subcultural species in my estimation. I find myself caught in the illogic of having sympathy for them as individuals, but not as a group.

Perhaps we are wrong in thinking of Private G. I.'s religion only in terms of church attendance and praying. If I were asked whether practical religion had improved among the men of the service, I should have to say "Yes, definitely!" Toleration, give and take, mutual respect, all of these have showed decided improvement. Nor is Private G. I. behind the door when it comes to supporting a good cause. Our Christmas program, which I shall describe later on, was evidence enough that, when it comes to practical religion, Private G. I. can still be relied upon to come through. And just as much in India as in the States.

## DEATH—AND IRONY

ONE of my jobs was to organize lectures and discussions, especially when time dragged heavy in the dust. Up there, with the nearest town some fifty miles away, my program was of some value for a few of the better educated, although I put on a course in Practical Psychology one time that the whole post went for.

On this particular night our discussion centered on irony as a form of literature. The leader of the meeting was that handsome young rascal from Utah. Tommy could think, and he could express his thoughts better than most of us. He opened the discussion with a description of irony that would have done credit to Jack Thompson.

"Irony," said Tommy, "is the highest form of literature because it is so difficult to achieve in its effect. The ironic situation is intricate, and its essential goal is chagrin, mingled with surprise. In an ironic situation, the schemes, plans, foresight, and prescience of the actor serve only as a boomerang which comes back to destroy him. The actor in the situation takes every course of action which will insure the success of his plans. The onlookers, too, identify themselves with the actor, and they can see that his every action is well calculated to achieve his ends. But the ironic situation closes like the slam of a door with a one-way look; the actor is left outside it, a victim of his own foresight. He is a mere pawn in the hands of Destiny."

We hadn't been at this base in Bihar one week when we had our first losses—and not from enemy action, either.

A bunch of us were sitting on the porch of the 22 barracks watching Bill Avon draw caricatures of the men in the squadron one evening. Bill had caught almost everybody and was working on one which showed himself falling out of a plane, and a tiger waiting on the ground for him. While we were thus engaged, someone came along and announced that Flight C would do a training run tomorrow. Bill Avon was to pilot one plane; Nosick, the second; and Sam Eaves, the third. In all, seven or eight men were scheduled to go in the two wing planes, and four in the lead plane.

I watched the flight rather casually the next morning. The boys came over in perfect formation and passed on toward the southeast. Two minutes later, two planes and eleven men were no more. As an eyewitness described it, the two wing planes were going through a change-over maneuver. Avon's plane dropped under Sam Eaves', and Sam's plane slid over to the right and Avon came up and took Sam's place while Sam moved into Avon's place. Just as they were changing back, something happened. The wings of the two planes locked and in a trice both of them were hurtling to the ground. They hit about four miles south of the runway, and the explosion could be heard for miles. Only seven men were supposed to be in those two planes, but we soon learned that four extra men had gone along for the ride—they had never been up in a plane before. Of these eleven men, only five bodies were identifiable. We picked up the fragments of the others and distributed them in six caskets, feeling reasonably sure that at least a part of each man was in each casket. Now look at the irony of it!

Tommy illustrated his point with a beautiful little bit of irony from the Russian. In this case, a merchant sends his servant to do the marketing. In the bazaar, the servant is rudely jostled, and upon turning his head, he looks into the

face of Death, who leers at him horribly. In great fear, the poor man hastens back to his master and begs money to flee to Samarkand. Later in the day, the master decides to finish the shopping himself, and there in the market place he, too, meets Death. "What do you mean," he demands of Death, "by making a horrible grimace at my servant and frightening him half to death?" "Horrible grimace? Why, that was a look of surprise. I was surprised to see him here in Tashkent. I have a rendezvous with him in Samarkand tonight."

After Tommy's opening remarks the meeting was thrown open for discussion and comment. Brodsky, a New York City College man, recalled a fine bit of irony in the Old Testament in the story of David and Nathan, and I contributed a bit from the story of the Good Samaritan in the New Testament, and from the story of the Rape of Tamar in the Old Testament. Few people have realized that the Bible is the richest source for this form of literature. The Jews have always been masters at it.

Soon personal opinions and observations began to creep in, and, without knowing it, we were launched fully on a discussion of the ironic situations which had occurred in our own outfit. I had never considered them as ironic before; just took them as a matter of course, perhaps because we don't like to ponder our losses too much—it's bad for morale. But it was really odd how many cases we actually had.

Halstead had walked out of China. The story of his escape read like a chapter from Rafael Sabatini. He had escaped death not once, but many times, and he came to smile at danger, for it seemed that he had a charmed life. But Death got him because of someone's simple mistake on a training flight.

Of the four men who were not supposed to be in that plane, at least two of them had begged to be taken along, even overstepping regulations to get in on it. One of the four

wanted a "safe" ride in a plane just to say he had been up. He frankly admitted that he was "allergic" to the darned things and wanted no part of combat experience.

And the man whose simple mistake was believed responsible for the accident! If ever a man entered a plane loaded with curses, it was that man. Only a week or two before, he had willfully and deliberately shot Major, the 490th's G.I. bull terrier, brought from the States, as squadron mascot. Major died of gangrene, and the whole outfit swore a terrible vengeance. The curses had nothing to do with the accident, of course, but the whole incident was an index to the irresponsibility of a man. A man who would shoot a mascot for no reason at all and thus endanger the unity of the whole group should never have been placed in a position of directive responsibility in the first place.

Toward the end of 1943 the Japs had been showing a little more opposition to our raids over Burma, and it became almost a certainty that our boys would be "jumped" soon after they crossed the Chin Hills. We met this situation with a squadron of P-38's which went over with us as top cover. Colonel Philpott, our C.O., took the fighter boys over the bomb line on a couple of reconnaissance flights so as to orient them in the territory over which they were to fly. Then they started accompanying the bombers. Nothing happened on the first few missions, fortunately, and the boys began to talk a lot of fighting. Sealy was a rather quiet lad, though, without much to say; but he seemed pretty confident and competent. He had "gentleman" written all over him, too. It was Saturday, and the target for the day was in the direction of Swebo, a Japanese air base. Before the bombers reached the target, they were attacked by a swarm of Zeros which came up out of Swebo. Our fighters, though heavily outnumbered, did a mighty fine job of keeping the Zeros

away from the bombers, which is what they were supposed to do. They had orders not to leave the bombers to go after Zeros, since this was just what the Japs wanted. The temptation was too great for one of our boys, and he peeled off to go after what seemed an easy one. The quiet, reliable Sealy, who was on the impetuous one's wing, kept his head and stayed put throughout the whole action, doing a marvelous job of holding two bases until the other boy got back into formation, which he did successfully—a near-miracle. Once you get out of formation with a bunch of Zeros on your tail, you're a dead pigeon!

Well, the fighters got the bombers through to the target and all of them came on home. This side of the Chin Hills the fighters put on speed so as to get in and land ahead of the bombers, and so leave the field clear. Sealy was to be the fourth to land. He was circling for his approach and everything seemed to be under control. Suddenly, and without any kind of warning, his plane was hurtling to the ground, which it hit with a sickening crash and burst into flames. Sealy never stood a chance; he was burned to death before we could get him out. In his cockpit we found the remains of a vulture and then we knew what had happened. These huge and loathsome creatures fly at terrific heights, and not infrequently they become fouled in our planes. The president of one of the big airplane manufacturing companies got one on his lap one day when he was copilot on a test flight with our C.O. It ruined his suit, but he presumably had enough coupons to get another when he got home. Evidently, this bird had crashed through the cockpit and stunned Sealy. His plane came down out of control.

It was ironic, we thought, for Sealy to have escaped the human buzzards only to be brought low by one of the Bengal variety.

I have before me a letter from a Mrs. Helen Milstrom asking for news of her brother who, she says, hasn't written for some time. And no wonder! With several other men of our outfit, he was on his way home after having completed his tour of duty with us. He had come through every mission without a scratch, and he and his buddies had reached Accra, Africa, on their way home. Their plane crashed on the take-off at Accra. Every single one of them was killed.

Then we started skip bombing. The battles of the Bismarck and Coral seas had demonstrated the efficacy of this technique against certain kinds of targets. Our boys got orders to practice skip bombing in preparation for a new series of sweeps. We established a bombing range and the boys went to it.

A tragedy marked the first few days of their training. The range was situated in a lonely spot some four miles from the base. The native population had been warned by jungle drums not to come near nor to touch any of the bombs lying on the ground. These practice bombs were filled with about four pounds of explosive; not enough to do much damage, except to the person. Despite warnings, the natives used to sneak on the range to retrieve the fragments of metal. A group of them came upon an unexploded bomb and picked it up. It went off in their faces, burning four of them horribly. They died a few days later.

In the estimation of some of the men, it was rather late for low-level bombing in Burma. That should have started at least a year sooner, before the Japs had time to move in fighters and ack-ack. We had done most of our bombing from high altitude with poor result at first. In those early days the Japs used to taunt us over the radio with, "We'll blow the bridge up for you if you'll stop bombing the rice paddies; the natives will have no food next year."



By the time we got around to skip bombing most of the important targets were well defended. We found that out when Major Sorensen went down low to plant a bomb on the Mytinge Bridge. Westwood was hit by ground fire and killed.

Soon the skip bombing began in earnest, and we began to lose ships and crews. We lost Fair, Higgins, Donetti, Lamont, and a few others. We don't know what happened to them; they just failed to come back, that's all. Some of the boys contended that their bombs had exploded prematurely, catching them instead of catching the target. One of our pilots who came back from the raid on which we lost Higgins claimed he saw a bomb explode below Higgins's plane; so it is possible. Others believed that the Japs had strung up cables in front of the targets to catch those flying low. Then we had bad weather and mountains to contend with, which might have accounted for some planes. It's easy to hit the side of a mountain during the monsoons.

That some of our planes were brought down by ack-ack there is no reason to doubt. We nearly lost Major McCarten and his crew that way. Mac went on a river sweep up the Irrawaddy. Soon they spotted a large ship and came in for a run on the target. As they approached it a murder ack-ack barrage came up at short range. The bomber was riddled, but Mac, nothing daunted, came in for another run. He planted a second bomb amidships which, like the first, also failed to go off. The ack-ack was even worse this time. With gas tanks almost shot out, Mac pulled away and gained altitude and streaked for home. They had barely crossed the Chin Hills when his gas gave out entirely, and the whole crew bailed out.

When Mac and his crew failed to come in that night, we knew they were gone. Captain Weatherly went out to look

for him, but it was not only hopeless; it was useless. When a plane goes down in those jungles, it disappears as completely as a quart of Scotch in Argyll. Outsiders would have thought us heartless because we showed so little concern outwardly for the loss of Mac and his men. But in time of war men are killed every day, and one who explodes emotionally over each case soon becomes emotionally exhausted.

A week later we got the news that the entire crew was safe and was on the way out. Apart from the injuries incidental to bailing out, they were unscathed. Every one of them had come down at the edge of these dense jungle; jungle through which not even a Jap can penetrate.

Most of the boys had minor scratches, but Purdue had wrenched a shoulder. As his chute opened, two of its panels blew out immediately, and he came down with a rush. The Major was black and blue from landing at full length. It seems that when he grabbed a chute, he grabbed the smallest one and it fitted him only around the knees. Consequently, he came down with his head hanging down and just managed to heave himself out straight as he hit the ground. Captain Southworth came down in a ravine, the peculiar air currents of which caused his chute to collapse prematurely. He hit the water with a mighty splash. Seiler and Chibnik were least shaken up of the lot.

Mac and his men were paddled down the river to Chit-tagong by two natives, both with secondary syphilis. The boys called the smaller of the two "Little Syph" and the other "Big Syph." That was the only crew that ever came back in those early days of our skip-bombing experience. Later on we had many crews walk out, but none that came down over the target; to come down over the target while skip bombing is certain death. No one can hit the ground in a plane going two or three hundred miles an hour and

live to tell about it. The crews that walked out either ran out of gas and bailed out, or got lost and bailed out.

Our losses didn't bother us as a group until we got to China. The first two months up there, we lost plenty of ships and crews. Here our mission was a little different from what it had been in Burma. We went after rolling stock and shipping, with occasional cracks at dumps and docks. Going after shipping in the Gulf of Tonkin is dangerous work at any time. There was usually an overcast, so that the boys had to skim the water to look for their prey; then there were rocky prominences sticking out of the water into which they could crash if they weren't on their toes every minute. And the mountains came down to the sea here, too.

Three of our planes hit the masts of ships—and came back to tell about it. The Japanese took to painting the masts a gray-blue to match the ocean and to increase the difficulties of discrimination at three hundred miles an hour. Estimating height and distance at that speed tests the skill of the pilot.

The Loerding and Beatty affairs nearly shattered the morale of one entire squadron.

Beatty was from Arkansas. He was the youngest pilot in the group, and he looked the youngest in the world. He was tall, skinny, gangling, had unruly black curly hair, and a broken front tooth which peeped out between an impish grin. Although they never said it, the crews used to "sweat" having to fly with Beatty—he was so obviously young and seemingly reckless; and it used to be a job to get him out of the sack. He told me he could sleep sixteen hours a day comfortably and then grumble about having to get up. I believed him.

It was the Sylhet experience which put Beatty in solid with everybody and convinced us all that beneath that boyish exterior beat the heart of a man and a clever pilot; a man

with guts and a clear head. Oh, sure, it was a crazy thing to begin with.

Beatty's plane was due in at six-fifteen. I had the staff car; so I went out to the field to pick him and the crew up. At five minutes after six a plane suddenly appeared out of the trees and made off east. It climbed to about two thousand feet and soon disappeared. I couldn't make out why a plane should come in over the field on the buzz and then go off east. We knew the Japs had some of our planes, and I began to suspect that had been a Jap. I went over to the tower to make inquiries. All I could find out was that Beatty's estimated time of arrival was six-twenty. Beyond that, there was no news. They didn't know a thing about the plane that had just gone over. But even while I was talking Beatty's voice came in over the radio asking for a line on the field. He circled around and around somewhere, over the field, he tried to tell us, but we knew he was nowhere near our field now. Soon it was dark, and Beatty called for landing lights; we still couldn't see nor hear him.

"Put your lights on!" yelled Beatty again.

"They are on," said the radio man.

"The — they are! I can't see 'em."

"Well, they're on. So what!"

"You're nuts! I'm right over the strip: there ain't no lights on."

We went out and scanned the sky once more; no Beatty. It was pitch-dark now. Soon we lost all radio contact with him, and we figured he had bailed out somewhere. We put in emergency calls to all fields in the area; but no one had any news of him.

At eight o'clock the next morning he blew in from Sylhet, as cheerful as ever. Then he told us the whole story. He had no navigator. Since he had a strong tail wind, he had over-

shot our field, going on about fifty miles northeast before starting to look for it. When he did locate a field, it was the new field at Sylhet which the British were getting ready for us. He never was over our field. He could faintly make out the runway in the dark, and he decided to come in for a landing. Fortunately a British officer happened to be on the spot and frantically signaled "no!" to him with a flashlight. Beatty swooped up in the nick of time. He tried it again, and again came the frantic "No!" followed by "Wait!" That British officer really showed his mettle in that spot. The landing strip was only partially finished; some of the cement had just been poured that day. Oxcarts, trucks, and piles of bricks littered the strip from end to end.

While Beatty circled and circled in the dark overhead, this Limey routed out every available coolie and white man and cleared enough of the strip for Beatty to make a forced landing. By this time he knew that Beatty was in trouble. There were no landing lights; so the officer lined up the trucks and turned on their lights, which served at least as boundary lights. Then he signaled Beatty in.

On his first approach, Beatty was wide of the runway and miraculously he picked that plane up and got away. Then he tried again. This time he was too far in the other direction. By computing the two previous runs, Beatty figured he must come in at a hundred and eighty degrees, which he did. A hundred feet after he lit, his right prop hit a cow, one of a herd that was bedding for the night on the runway. The coolies and the British had missed it. Dead cow. Beatty brought that plane to a stop just inches from the wet cement.

"Why didn't you jump and leave the — plane?" asked the C.O. when Beatty came in.

"What!" yelled Beatty. "With all that beer in it! Talk sense!"

The boys swore by Beatty after that, and he vied with Bucky Fiske as the favorite pilot. What a man that kid was! He used to come to "Operations" and beg to be allowed to fly even after he had all his time in. His goal was 400 combat hours; he had 389, more than anybody in the squadron, and they were all tough ones, too.

Beatty didn't have to fly that last mission. He just begged the Major to let him go. My, that boy was eager! And it killed him. He had planted his bomb with his usual skill and was coming out. What happened then is only conjecture; but those who saw his plane crack up think that he must have been hit by ground fire and wounded or killed. The left wing of the plane suddenly dipped into the water and the plane started cart-wheeling. In a matter of seconds all that remained of Beatty and the brave men with him was a bit of floating wreckage and an empty, forlorn life raft. I never came so near crying over the loss of a man in my life as I did when I got the news about Beatty.

Beatty's loss followed right on the heels of Loerding's. Both Loerding and Beatty were on their last missions when they got it. Some of the other crews we lost were also on their last or next to last missions. The loss of these two men finally shattered the confidence of the entire combat force in the squadron. Gloom settled over the entire post and we were all asking, "Who will be next?" It was the men longest in the service who were getting lost, and apathy seized most of the older combat crews. Bucky Fiske was one of the few men to keep their balance, but even he looked at me with a sheepish grin one day.

"Guess I'll be the next one to go, Chaplain. All of us older pilots are getting it."

"Nonsense, Bucky," I replied, "you've got that 'State-side' look on you. You're going home, all right."

But when Bucky was worried things were bad, and I knew that something would have to be done.

About twelve o'clock the night we got the news that Beatty wasn't coming back, a group of enlisted men burst into my quarters—slightly “under,” it seemed. They were steady men, men who never touched the stuff. They nearly collapsed in maudlin tears.

“Chaplain, we wan’ memorial service for Loerding and Beatty and all those boys. Why don’ we have mass for ev’ man that goes down? Tell us, Chaplain, huh?”

These drunken men in my quarters were a symptom of something fundamentally wrong on the post and with the morale of the outfit. Some of them had seen Loerding’s ship go down with all guns blasting to the very end, and they were deeply moved. Their description of this, even in their cups, was strangely vivid and moving. I listened to them patiently for a half-hour, and although I was against dramatizing our losses by holding memorial services I promised to hold such a service on the morrow eve.

After the men had gone, I went in search of Major Weatherly, the squadron C.O. The major looked at me in silence as I described the situation.

Finally he said: “Thank you, Chaplain. I’ll surely appreciate anything you can do. The men need something, all right, and perhaps you’ve got it.”

The recreation hall was packed at the service that night. Every man there was waiting for what I had to say; there had been no little speculation about it during the day. In making up the program I found myself without an appropriate hymn; so I sat down and wrote the following, to the tune of “Abide with Me”:

Though scattered far within this foreign soil  
Rest now our comrades, freed of earthly toil.

Theirs was the faith that, come the need, they must  
Nourish the soil of Freedom with their dust.

These crossed the hills to meet a crafty foe;  
Nor did they shrink when called to strike their blow.  
Within their hearts they bore that sense of right  
That turns war's darkness into Freedom's light.

Lord, from Thy heaven show Thy welcome face;  
Bless these our dead and keep them in Thy grace.  
To those who mourn, a stay and comfort be  
Till they with them are met in heav'n with Thee.

These floral wreaths are but a memory  
Of those we loved, now gathered unto Thee.  
In ev'ry flow'r this constant truth resides:  
They fade with sunset, but Thy love abides.

The program went off very well. The hymns and the prayers were for the dead; my address was for the living. Using the words of Jesus, "Let not your heart be troubled" (John 14:1), I said in substance:

"Our losses recently have been of such a nature that each of us has been forced to reexamine his own personal relation to the situation in which he finds himself. A poll of our attitudes would find us mentally and emotionally confused. Many of us have given way completely to hopelessness and despair. We have seen our best friends go out one by one and fail to come back, and we wonder if it will be our turn next. Others of us have been completely cynical. We have said, 'I just risk my life while somebody at home makes money: I'm the goat.'

"All of us should keep in mind the fact that it is the assumption of those who go to war that they are likely to die.



In a sense, then, our lives are already forfeit. Such being the case, death, far from being a shock to us, should be the natural expectation of men at war. If this is not your expectation, then go back to your barracks and tear off that uniform, for you dishonor those of our number who went bravely forth and did not come back.

"If there is any hope in our situation, it must derive from the fact that, by wholehearted effort on our part, by the will to fight and win, we may yet save the lives which we already consider forfeit. And in this hope we may gain strength and power in the words of Jesus, 'Let not your heart be troubled'; for they call us to the religious point of view concerning the situation in which we are involved. It is significant that the religious point of view takes death for granted; so much so that it refuses to dramatize death in any way. For after all, to the religious outlook, death is but a steppingstone to life. But the religious point of view also gives point and meaning to the struggle, heartaches, and sacrifice of life, and indeed, to its ultimate end: death.

"By being anxious we cannot add one cubit to our lives; no, not even one short hour. On the contrary, anxiety may well subtract one cubit from your life; for a worried man is an inefficient man, and in modern warfare inefficiency pays off surely in death."

The next day at least two dozen men came to me personally and thanked me for my words. The Major was particularly grateful.

"Chaplain," he said, "I've wanted to get the men together and talk this whole business over with them. I thought that a memorial service was going to make it even harder for me, and I dreaded what you might say. What you said was just the thing, and this morning I was able to call the men together, since now I had a basis for talking."

One of the younger officers, Percival, also came to me and said something similar: "Chaplain, we sure needed what you said last night. I was going to pieces around here; I think I've got my bearings again, now."

And Ball came to see me. Ball was an enlisted man and a fine, steady boy who neither drank nor caroused—until this thing hit us. He had seen Loerding's ship go down into the sea, and he had gone to pieces about it. The collapse of so steady a man had done much to send the other men over the brink.

"Chaplain," he said with obvious nervousness, "how do you cure a coward?"

"I don't know. I've been in the army only two years, so I haven't had a chance to meet one."

"You're looking at one now!"

"Tell me about it, Ball!" I said.

"I saw the whole thing, I tell you. Saw the guns blasting. Saw the Zero come in over the top of him. Saw the plane catch fire and peel off. Saw his face as he went by. Saw him hit the water. Saw the cloud of smoke on the water.

"It never bothered me until now, Chaplain. Although you might not realize it, I have a strong religious faith which has stood by me all this time; but now I'm scared to death about something. It isn't of being knocked off—I've faced that often enough. I'm scared to death even to think of flying again. We all are. We're all taking to drink because it helps us forget. And I never touched the stuff before. I've got to have it to get some sleep now.

"We just sit and sweat out the next mission to see who's on. It's just like waiting to read your death warrant. I'll go crazy if I can't snap out of this."

"How many of you feel like this, Ball?" I asked.

"All but a few. The Major and Captain Fiske can take it, I guess. The rest of us are yellow."

"Get the men together tomorrow at two o'clock," I said. "I want to talk to them."

"We'll sure appreciate it, Chaplain. We can't go on like this."

The next afternoon I sat down with the men and analyzed the situation with them and for them.

"Men," I said, "we were an old outfit when we came into this new assignment. Our time to go home is rapidly approaching. In our old assignment we ran into little opposition, and our losses were relatively small. Recently we have lost crews who were on their final missions before returning to the States, and the rest of us are beginning to think that we may be next. What has happened to us is this: We are worried that, having come so far without a scratch, we are going to get it toward the end because our chances are running low. It is not cowardice, but anxiety. It never bothered us when home was still too remote to beckon. An anxiety neurosis is developing in all of you which shows itself in the hysterical paralysis which so many of you display. You say your guns jam in the critical moments. No—you jam. You suffer nightmares. You have to drink to calm your nerves. And now get this: All of these symptoms decrease your chance of coming back because they make you less efficient. You are not cowards; for this sort of thing happens to everybody. And what normal man doesn't want to make the home-go list after having come so near it?"

"Haven't you noticed, even down in India, that the men who were scheduled to go home never went on their last missions? Don't you remember the engine trouble that all those boys developed, which caused them to turn back?"

Were they cowards? They were some of the best and bravest chaps that ever hit this theater, and they just wanted to see their wives and children once more after having come so close. Sure, a mere flutter becomes engine trouble to a guy like that—or he even imagines engine trouble.

"This attitude will decrease your chance of coming back also, because an anxious man is an overly cautious man. Instead of busting right into the target, he turns away and exposes himself."

That night I talked to Daviet, the squadron doc, about it. His analysis agreed with mine. "But what can I do, Chaplain?" he asked. "I know these men are not fit to be placed in charge of other men's lives, so I ground them. But then I get orders from headquarters to try them on combat for another month so as to check on them further. They're lucky if they come back for me to check on." Daviet is conscientious to a fault, and a bulwark of medical and psychiatric understanding. The army needs more like him.

I think the cause would be better served if the men had a lower achievement schedule before getting to go home, and if they never knew exactly when they were going home. An indefinite number of combat hours, somewhere between two hundred and three hundred, would be my guess. Let the doc and the C.O. decide when a man's had enough; then send him home after grounding him suddenly.

It did help our men somewhat just to have me put their mental states and their causes into words. Of course, I advised them to get rid of the "coward" idea and to admit freely when they were afraid. This hero-coward dichotomy is deadly. No man is responsible for the tricks complicated situations play upon him. I don't know any cowards.

## ON WITH THE SHOW

IF THERE is any one outfit that had my sympathy down there in Bihar, it was the Ack-ack outfit that guarded our field. These boys had nothing to do but to wait for Japanese raiders who never came. The monotony of sitting in a trench or emplacement and waiting for nonexistent Jap raiders is unbelievable. I could well understand the disappointment on the faces of the men when the "All clear" was sounded after another false alarm.

"Fellows," I used to say to them, "be glad they didn't show up. It's more important that we have no deaths than it is for you to have a chance to show how good you are with those guns."

We longed for the movies to get going as a relief from the monotony that would give the boys something to do in the evenings and something to talk about in the days. We had a projector, and we were on the film route; but we had no hall or covered area in which to show the films. Showing them outside was hazardous, because the sudden rainstorms invariably interrupted them and sometimes ruined the film to boot. A few interruptions, and the boys refused to attend any more. Then Colonel Philpott came in as Deputy Group Commander with his reputation for giving the enlisted men every break. He attacked the theater problem first. And he was a go-getter. Waldane Stephens was Utilities Officer at that time; so the Colonel called him in first.

"Steve," said the Colonel, "I'm sick of this whole — movie

business. We're going to get us a theater built. How many Wogs can you spare for the job?"

"It isn't a problem of labor, sir. It's materials."

"Materials? What do we need?"

"Brick, cement, and galvanized iron for a roof. We gotta have a roof."

"— —! There's tons of that kind of stuff around this place if we go after it, Steve."

"Sure is. But the Wog contractors own it all. Try and get it off them. And there's none of that tin roofing except on the roofs of their buildings."

"That settles it! Steve, I want a theater built right there at the crossroads in one week, or it's your . . ."

"Yes, sir!" Steve knew Philpott meant what he said.

And the job was finished on schedule. All Steve needs is the go-ahead signal, and he can sure get things done. Every morning on my way to the office I saw fresh piles of brick and bags of cement which had appeared mysteriously during the night. I could have sworn they weren't there the night before, and I knew the Wogs didn't work at night. The stack of tin roofing kept getting higher and higher. I wondered where in the world they had located all that second-hand roofing.

The bossing of the coolies was turned over to Greenwald, who had a smattering of Urdu. Philpott would show up every hour or so to scorch everybody's pants and get wheels under them. It was my custom to inspect the job on my way to the Utilities Office, where I drank a cup of Darjeeling tea with Steve. Lately, Steve and his assistant, Chick Peeler, were sleeping most of the time. I wondered what had converted the diligent Steve into a sack artist (Peeler always had been one); but I didn't wonder long.

The Inspector of the Indian C.I.D. (Criminal Investiga-

tion Department) was sent to me by that incurable jokester Willy, our Adjutant. Willy sent everybody to see me first, from Limey generals on down. I met each visitor gravely and assured him that I was the C.O.'s special representative.

"Captain," said Inspector Rajagopal, "it is that many of our contractors have had the large quantities of materials stolen from them at night. In one case an entire galvanized building was dismantled and removed while the contractor was himself sleeping in it, and when he awake he is have nothing over his head. It is gone. We think that it is perhaps the thieves sell these things to contractors on this post, Captain. It is that you will assist us in this matter, sir?"

"I will do all I can, Inspector."

"Thank you, Captain. And now all of this material at this new building at the crossroad, do you know where it have come?"

"Come with me, Inspector. I'll let you talk to Lieutenant Stephens, the Special Supply of Unobtainable Materials Officer." My suspicions were more than aroused now. Let Steve do the lying about it, I figured.

Steve and Peeler were sleeping soundly when I entered their office. A native bearer was indolently pulling the punkah rope, working the huge sweep fan over the sleeping figures. I got Steve up.

"Lieutenant Stephens," I said, "this is Inspector Rajagopal of the Indian Criminal Investigation Department. He would like to ask you a few questions about the new project at the crossroads. Where did you get the materials, particularly?"

"Oh, sure," said Steve, "sit down, Inspector. Yes, sir! Project Number 7-14. Here it is right here. Yes. All materials supplied by our own Special Roving Misappropriation Detail, Field Procurement Unit Number One, Corporal Peeler in charge. Ho, Peeler!" yelled Steve.

"Yes, sir! Coming, sir!"

"Corporal Peeler, isn't all this stuff for the post theater cleared through your records?" Steve winked on the off side.

Peeler disappeared and returned in a few minutes with a huge sheaf of papers, mostly from home.

"Yes, sir! Here it is right here: Item 4-760. Want to see the requisition forms, sir?"

"That won't be necessary, Peeler. Return them to the secret file."

Peeler disappeared again, only to reappear with a long cold drink for the Inspector, who smiled his satisfaction at such efficiency.

"You Americans do the efficiency very well, no?"

I turned to him and said, "I hope you are able to locate the stolen materials, sir."

"Ah, no! The Indian fellow is a great thief. By now it is taken across the river out from my jurisdiction."

As he left, Steve pressed a package of cigarettes upon him, to his immense satisfaction.

The theater was finished on time. And why not? With Steve and Peeler spotting the stuff and obtaining it at night, and Greenwald bossing the construction, and Philpott raising Ned every hour because the job wasn't going up fast enough.

At first it looked as if their efforts were going to be all in vain. The pictures we got! Holy smoke! I'd never seen such stinkeroos in all my life. When they showed "The Three Dopes" the fellows used to go through the motions of vomiting. A couple of us didn't need to pretend. The crowning insult came one night when they showed two shorts, one starring the Three Dopes and the other featuring Elgar Bennedy, and followed these up with "In Old Calidelphia" featuring nobody in particular. The Ack-ack boys withdrew



in a body and repaired to Mitter Brothers' Chow Line to hold a meeting on it.

That was a momentous meeting because of the momentous and virtuous decisions they made. It was decided to send three chaps A.W.O.L. back to the States with instructions to (1) hang Elgar Bennedy, (2) torture the Three Dopes to death and jump up and down on their carcasses, and (3) find out who put out "In Old Calidelphia" and burn his house down and shoot all his relatives. The boys argued a long time about that last clause; but it was finally rescinded because they figured his relatives were sponging off him anyway, and that was good for the son of a—gun. The delegates were instructed to leave the next day, but the beer ration came in. And so another fine and worthy cause was lost on the foam of circumstance, never to be revived.

While I'm speaking of it, that Ack-ack outfit was the queerest bunch of G.I.'s I've ever seen—from the point of view of physique. I used to wonder how in the world they had passed their physicals. I pondered the matter. These men had looked all right when they first came to our post from the States, in January. And they were eager! Man! Then gradually they seemed to change their bodily shapes.

Sure, they had nothing to do but sit in a trench and watch the skies for Japanese raiders. That, and eat. And the inactivity and the chow conspired to do things to their waist lines. Soon their clothes no longer fitted them, and they had to have a new issue. Shortly after, I began to notice that these boys were built so queerly; they had long fat bodies and short legs. I racked my brains for the medical term for this condition and decided it was "acromegaly" or something like that. This disease is caused by a change in diet, I think, due to a lack of vitamins which somehow affects their glands or something so that their bodies get longer and longer while

their legs get shorter and shorter. Something like that, anyway.

This condition of the Ack-ack boys bothered me so much that I finally went to see Johnny, the group doc, about it. Johnny looked very much depressed when I mentioned the matter.

"Sho' is sump'n wrong with those po' boys, a' right, Chap'ain. They're too broad across the narrows and too long in they sho'ts."

I agreed. I never could put things as neatly as Johnny.

One of the Ack-ack boys was in the dispensary right then: Corporal Figuly. When I saw him I nearly burst out crying; it was so pitiful. And they nearly all looked like Figuly. How in the world was I going to explain it to their wives and sweethearts?

Johnny and I looked at him sorrowfully and shook our heads. I wondered if the boys themselves were aware of their condition.

"Figuly, my boy," I said, "your legs look kind of—er—ah—er—a bit on the short side, what?"

"You ain't kiddin'! I got to kneel down to scratch my head, sir."

"How do you manage to—er—lace your shoes?"

"Put one foot in a hole, sir."

Doc and I exchanged glances of concern. Johnny continued where I left off.

"How yo'-all manage to put yo' hands in yo' pockets, Figuhly? They look kinda low to me."

"I stand on a chair, sir."

Johnny and I exchanged silent glances again, our hearts nearly in two over this misshapen hunk of G.I.

"What can be done at this stage of the game, Johnny?" I whispered.

Johnny shook his head. "'F'aid Ah cain' he'p the po' boy no' mo'," he whispered back in genuine sorrow. He turned. "Figuhly, yo'-all come ovah the hospital with me. Yo'-all kin come, too, Chap'ain."

We piled into Johnny's jeep and drove over to the 98th Station Hospital, where he had a whispered conference with Kwinn, the X-ray man, and we went into the X-ray room. Kwinn pushed Figuly behind the screen and turned on the juice. Johnny and I looked at the silhouette on the ground plate. Figuly had a perfectly proportioned body—a little "broad across the narrows," as Johnny said, but otherwise perfectly normal.

Johnny scratched his head in perplexity. Then he said: "Come out here, Figuly."

Figuly came out.

"Now," said Johnny, "yo'-all pull up yo' pants fa' as they go."

"Can't!"

"Why not?"

"My elbows don't bend that much, sir!"

"Loosen your pants in front," I said. "I'll pull them up."

I stepped behind him and heaved. His pants shot up under his armpits, and a foot of his legs stuck out below. Then the truth dawned upon us: The boys had grown so fat doing nothing that when the new togs were issued they had to take such large sizes for a proper fit at the waist that the crotch came down to their knees, giving them the effect of long, round bodies and short legs. We sighed with relief.

The next day Johnny called up Captain Murphy about it. And did those Ack-ack boys sweat it off after that! Murph made them run miles and play every game in the book. They look like Americans again, now; and, like Americans, they're

developing an interest in livestock. I must tell you about it sometime.

But to get back to the movies: A few good pictures did come around. The night they showed "Pride of the Yankees" the whole post turned out. Men even left the switchboards to see it. Temporarily, at least, the whole post ceased to function. Halfway through the show the generator broke down, and there was an immediate howl of anger and impatience. At least five details rushed off to grab substitute generators. In half an hour the show was on again—with three additional generators as stand-by equipment. Greenwald was running the projector, and every time the show stopped to change film the crowd would roar, "Hang Greenwald! Let's get this show finished!"

Even the Gurkha guards, so carefully trained by Stromberg, deserted their posts to see what the noise and the yelling was about. And that's when it must have happened.

At eleven o'clock the next morning the Finance Officer went to get some change out of the safe. But there was no safe! Gone! Vanished! And with it forty thousand dollars—one hundred and thirty thousand rupees! Our baksheesh!

There was really some action on the post then. The whole place was turned out to beat the brush, but all we found was the safe with a hole as big as a hoop burned in it. Peeler and his Misappropriation Detail were able to prove that they were watching "Pride of the Yankees"; which was fortunate for Peeler.

Dozens of people were arrested, and dozens more traced and watched; but no sign of the money was found. The British police authorities were called in immediately; but it was no use. Finally, Bucky Fiske, the Provost Marshal, traced the crime to three sweepers who worked at the post and lived in a small village near by. All three accused each other, but

denied any personal knowledge of the crime or the money. They were the guilty ones, all right—but do you think you could get any information as to the whereabouts of the money out of them? No, sir! Bucky even took a shot at one of them and missed his head by two inches, but he still refused to talk. That forty thousand dollars was gone for good. Our boys felt plenty chagrined that a couple of simple villagers should pull off such a successful coup right under their noses and get away with it. We certainly hope that Kerin, Gopi, and Raya never decide to visit the States.

Then the Jewish boys got back from Calcutta where, by all accounts, they had been far from idle. Roy Brodsky hinted of a grand vaudeville and burlesque show which went under the name Besa Show (British Entertainment Service for the Army), and which was ready to go on the road. How Brodsky came to know about it is still hard to imagine since he was in Calcutta to attend religious services at the synagogue. But he could describe the show to the last detail.

Since the movies had disappointed the boys pretty much, a B.B.B. movement was soon organized on the post (Bring the Burlesque to the Boys). Colonel Philpott was all for it, but Spider Webb, the Special Service Officer, pointed out that we had no facilities beyond a stage to put the show on with. We had no stage equipment of any kind, no lights, no curtains, no back-drops, no scenery, nothing.

"Then let's buy some," said Philpott. "Send a detail to Calcutta and get what we need."

"What'll we use for money?" asked Spider. "We spent all we had for a set of musical instruments."

"—! Use the squadron's funds! Use the 22nd's money."

"Gone on a saxophone!"

"Then use the 491st's."

"Gone on a trombone!"

"Well, heck, then use the PX fund."

"Gone on a trumpet and clarinet!"

Philpott fumed. He turned to Steve and asked, "Who's the best Procurement man on the post, Steve?"

"Peeler. Unless you want an officer."

"Yeah. Must be an officer."

"Then I'd nominate Doc Pheliss of the 22nd. Yes, Vince is your man."

"O.K. He goes to work on that stage fund tomorrow. And I don't care how or where he gets it, either."

"Oh, oh!" I said. "Vince Pheliss!" So I hurried home to find a new place to bury my dough and to put locks on all my drawers. So did Steve. So did Philpott. I knew this chap Pheliss. "I want it, I got it!" was his motto, said all in the same breath.

About two days later, Doc Pheliss called upon Jack at the Utilities and Provost Marshal's office.

"Jack," he said, "I want you and two men to accompany me at once. There is a brothel within walking distance of this post, and the men are beginning to come in with venereal disease cases."

"Not really, sir?" said Jack in innocent surprise.

"Yes, really! We will proceed into the brush and destroy this place and chase the hags off."

"O.K.," said Jack. "Right after lunch we'll—"

"We're going now!"

"You mean—now?" faltered Jack.

"Now. Let's go, jildi!"

That put Jack on the spot a bit, but he made a good show and got out two Tommy guns with no ammunition.

"Do you know where this place is, Doc?" asked Jack.

"No. But you do. Now, get going!"

For a minute Jack was baffled; so he took a chance and led

off to Frosty Liz's place. As they came near the place a couple of men took off into the brush. Liz came out and started to expostulate, but Doc cut her off with, "Chase these hags away, Jack. I will investigate the interior."

So Jack chased them off into the brush a couple of hundred yards; a rather futile thing, he thought, since they just set up shop again some other place. He had long ago concluded that the only way to treat such people was to shoot them. When he came back, Doc was rummaging through an old tin trunk that he had dragged out of the shack before he had set fire to the place.

"Stolen clothing here," he said as Jack came up sweating streams from his exertions. "Nothing else of value, though."

The next day a detail left for Calcutta to look into stage props and to interview the manager of the Besa Show. And later in the afternoon a "Pleader" came from Frosty Liz, asking that her money be turned back. Jack went to Doc Pheliss.

"Money? Did you see any money at that place, Jack? You were in charge of the raid, remember?"

"No-o-o, I didn't." Jack was as embarrassed as could be, but Doc had him.

"Then run the Pleader off the place."

On Saturday, in the Headquarters enlisted men's barracks, I learned that Greenwald's deal with old Ah Fu the laundryman had gone up the spout. It seemed that Greenwald got the stuff in town when he went in with the ration truck and old Ah Fu sold it for him. They split the profit. On Friday night he had gone to Ah Fu's to collect his cut.

"Kitna bottles you sellum, Ah Fu?" asked Greenwald. "Kitna roopes you humko doh?" (What's my cut?)

"No bottles. No rupees. No got," Ah Fu is reported to have said.

"Now, come, come, Ah Fu!" said Greenwald. "Don't give me that stuff! Fifty bottles I gave you. Come on, give me my baksheesh. Can do jildi!"

"No can do. No bottles. No baksheesh."

"Why, what happened?" asked Greenwald in alarm, thinking the Colonel had got onto him.

"Last tomollow night, plenty gleat officler. Takee all bottles. Takee all baksheesh. Say Ah Fu plenty gleat Dlapanesie pie. Puttee Ah Fu in cooler next time. Ah Fu do only washee no more."

The 22nd had a new supply of bamboo juice from somewhere for the weekend, and the boys in Calcutta bought the stage props with money to spare. No one knows to this day where the money came from. Doc Pheliss gave the job up because he claimed he couldn't raise a dime.

All that the Besa Show had to offer was a strip-tease act done by a man. Beyond that it was pretty feeble. But now we had stage props the boys started putting on their own G.I. shows. And they were plenty good, too. Brodsky turned out to be a star performer and song writer. A second Irving Berlin, I predict.

Along with the others, I have frequently wondered why the movies, no matter how poor the shows, are such a drawing card on every post. It has been my observation that if there are no movies or other shows the men practically die of ennui. What did we ever do before the movies came? And why don't we do those things now when there are no movies? The conclusion I've reached is that prior to the movies people found their recreation as they still do in backward countries or in small rural communities in the States: in a vast number of folk games and pastimes.

Commercialized recreation in all its forms put an end to



spontaneous group play, so that, left to itself, the new generation doesn't know how to amuse itself. We lack the ingenuity of children, and have never had a chance to learn the game patterns of our grandparents; and, once accustomed to being amused by the movies, we have no zeal for finding our own amusements. Captain Murphy, the C.O. of the Ack-ack outfit, tried desperately to interest the men in an athletic and recreational program which included baseball, horseshoes, badminton, and volley ball. Just a few men turned out—enough to kill whatever zeal these few displayed. Finally, Captain Murphy *ordered* every man to turn out for the games. Grumbling and mumbling against this "Tojoism" and "Hitlerism" went on for nearly a week, and then dried up with astonishing rapidity. By the end of the week the men had learned the games so well that complaint gave way to enthusiastic participation. Murphy's next problem was to keep them at their guns at least part of the time, and his efforts to do so were greeted with "Tojoism" and "Hitlerism." But Murph was a West Pointer and knew how to take it. He grinned and said, "How about a T.S. Slip, Chaplain?" I gave him a whole roll.

It might not be a bad idea to teach every trainee back in the States the fundamentals of at least a half-dozen outdoor games which need no equipment, such as duck-on-a-rock, and a half dozen indoor games to supplement the inevitable poker.

## CHOTA PEG

"CHOTA PEG" is the Indian name for a small shot of Scotch. It is also the name of Sleepy Lynn's dog, if dog it be. Chota Peg and I became fast friends during my stay at Chakulia down in Bihar, for I am quick to make up with comics. And Chota Peg, or Little Drink, is a clown of the dog world if ever there was one.

The pedigree said that Chota Peg was an Irish terrier. If he was, he must be a mutation. To me he looked like a mongrel of the very lowest order, and he was thoroughly Indian in his manners and culture. Imagine a diminutive untrimmed taffy-colored French poodle, equip him with the tufted tail of a small lion, garnish him with an expression of water-buffalo innocence, and you have a pretty fair picture of Chota Peg, the Scourge of Chakulia.

Really, Chota Peg was the exclusive property of Sleepy Lynn, but every man in the squadron evinced a proprietary interest in him. Each man kept an eye on Chota Peg because each man secretly coveted the honor of being the one to shoot him and was afraid that somebody else might beat him to it.

When I arrived at Chakulia in January, 1943, Lynn was on detached service in Calcutta—on Chowringhee Street specifically, with headquarters in the Grand Hotel. The care of Chota Peg he had tacitly conferred upon the entire Squadron. And Chota Peg, never a piker at heart, had attached himself to the squadron C.O., Major Puckett, who was "f'om down South, suh."

There never was a slicker pup than that Chota Peg. Just let some old Pi dog stray past the barracks and Chota Peg was out after him like a whirlwind—provided there was someone near to give him a hand in case the Pi dog turned on him. Old Chota would rush to attack anything if backed up by at least a dozen G.I.'s. Otherwise it was a case of discretion being the better part of valor—and Chota Peg had plenty of discretion.

In many ways Chota Peg was like a jackal; he slept all day and caroused around all night. Some of the boys saw in this a trace of the G.I. influence, but it was probably a throw-back to his ancestors. Anyway, it was Chota Peg's nocturnal habits which made him the Scourge of Allah. As I said, he slept all day long; but the moment the boys hit the sack for the night Chota Peg slunk outside and howled with the jackals and laughed with the hyenas. At first the boys used to get up and sneak out stealthily, feeling sure that a jackal or a hyena was to be had for the shooting, but they would find that it was only Chota Peg exercising his tonsils in harmony with the jungle folk. It got so nobody could sleep at night, and some kind of action had to be taken. The action consisted of the appointment of a detail charged with keeping Chota Peg awake and active during the day so that he would go to sleep at night. The Chota Peg detail thought they had the solution when they hit upon the idea of hauling the little tyke out into the country a couple of miles and letting him run home. It worked fine for a couple of days; but Chota Peg caught on to the scheme so that thereafter, whenever the boys dumped him out of the jeep, he would just crawl into the brush until nightfall. Then he would come home to howl on the porch.

After that the boys tried taking this mutt out to the line with them and keeping him busy until quitting time. This

dodge worked all right too, until some half-wit saw Chota Peg on the road and gave him a lift back into the barracks area; then the stuff was off because old Chota learned then how to hitch-hike.

The only reason why we didn't take him out into the brush and put a forty-five slug in him and have done with it, as far as I can see, was the uneasiness all men experience when contemplating the disposal of the useless, the feeling that leads them to collect junk in the attic, a sort of superstitious fear that the day after they've disposed of it they'll have a use for it. And it frequently turns out that way, too; at least it did in the case of Chota Peg.

After a couple of weeks of trying one scheme and another to correct the nuisance the Chota Peg detail gave up in disgust and decided to sweat out Lynn's return from Calcutta, where he had suffered some kind of relapsing ailment which kept him closely confined to the Grand Hotel, and which was costing him quite a bit of money to judge from the telegrams he sent to Zed Barnes for baksheesh. In the meantime Chota Peg attached himself more firmly to Major Puckett, suh. Puck was on the verge of a section eight after three weeks of Chota Peg. It was like this: there were two cots in Puck's room, and Chota Peg elected to sleep the days away on the one Puck had selected for himself. Puck moved over to the other one; but so did Chota Peg. No matter which cot Puckett selected, Chota Peg mysteriously knew and promptly moved over. Old Babu, the bearer, always had to hoist Chota Peg out of bed so that the Major could get in.

"Ah cain' do nothin' with this heah wuthless houn', Chap'ain, suh," sighed Puck to me one day. "No, suh. Ah sho wish Lynn git back heah f'om Calcutta."

Puck partially solved the problem by taking Chota Peg with him to the showers every day and dousing him under.

At least he became sweet enough to live with after a couple of baths.

Then Chota Peg learned a new trick. He would rush out in front of every vehicle which ran past the barracks, causing the driver to swerve wildly in trying to avoid hitting him. We wrecked two jeeps that way. Thereafter we kept him tied to the barracks with a chain: he gnawed through ropes like a canine Houdini. It got so bad around here that the boys hinted rather strongly that I should put on a special prayer session for the return of Lynn. I never did understand why everybody pinned so much hope on Lynn. As far as I could remember, Chota Peg was just as bad, no matter who took him in hand. Anyway, when Lynn finally did get back from Calcutta, he blithely made Chota Peg a squadron responsibility by claiming that the boys had undone all of the careful training he had put into him.

And did that Chota Peg love to play with a ball! What I mean is that he would have loved playing with a ball—if he had had a ball. But he made a good substitute out of a pair of socks. He got to nosing around in all the shoes looking for socks, and when he came across a pair of the proper degree of ripeness, off he would go with them, about fifty feet, and there he'd sit, growling and shaking the socks and begging for someone to come and chase him. If you did chase him he would grab the socks and tear around delightedly. When he got tired of running around he'd lie down and rip and tear the socks to shreds.

An uprising seemed in the air when the problem of Chota Peg was solved in a very simple and unexpected manner—temporarily at least. The Warrens at Jamshedpur gave Wilson Thomas a female Kerry blue terrier pup. And that pup altered Chota Peg's entire scheme of living. He and Penelope cavorted and gamboled all day long for the first few weeks,

and both were so tired by nightfall that they had no ambition to sit outside and howl. After two weeks Chota Peg made the disturbing discovery that Penny was a female, and from then on he wore himself to a shadow in attempts at love-making. When he was about to give up in discouragement and return to his former mode of life, he discovered Florence Nightingale, the female Pi dog which belonged to the nurses at the hospital. For the next several weeks we saw Chota Peg only at mealtimes. The nurses made every kind of complaint to Lynn, who met them all with, "Shoot the son of a gun!" The crowning infuriation came one day when Chota Peg yanked Helen Yavorski's nearly brand-new two-way stretch off the line, and before Helen could rescue it, he and Florence Nightingale had torn it to shreds.

"And it's the only genuine prewar girdle in all India!" wailed Helen. "Now what'll I do!"

Peeler offered to get her an old inner tube from an airplane tire, but Pender Wright, the squadron Supply Officer, turned thumbs down on it.

As long as Chota Peg was engaged with Florence Nightingale things went along grand; and we were beginning to forget what a headache on two fronts Chota Peg had been. The war once more was definitely becoming pleasant. And then the bomb fell. Lynn received orders to return to the States, and immediately the picture of Chota Peg popped into our minds. We recalled the harrowing days we had spent with him when Lynn was in Calcutta. Of course, Lynn never had taken any care of Chota Peg, and why we should be worried about his going home never occurred to us. I guess it was just that as long as Lynn was there we had someone to complain to and to blame for Chota Peg's misdemeanors. If Lynn left and Chota Peg remained . . . Oh, why think of it!

It was Slit Trench Kelly who saved the day. He had been C.O. of the original Chota Peg detail, and the thing must have preyed on his mind quite a bit. Slit Trench wasn't supposed to be very bright, but that was probably a false estimate based on the Ondal incident:

It seems that he was sent up to Ondal to look over some ordnance equipment we were supposed to get. While he was there a plane crashed, its bombs all going off on impact. It was early in the morning, around two-thirty, and the noise of the explosions awakened Slit Trench with a start. More asleep than alive, he rushed out naked and dived into the nearest slit trench thinking the Japs were bombing the place. The slit trench wasn't a slit trench; and anyway, it was too narrow for his body, so that as he went in he skinned all the hide off all his protruding parts and half killed a bearer who had dived in ahead of him. That's how he came to be called "Slit Trench."

But Slit Trench must have been smart to get this great idea all by himself. When he popped it at one of the poker sessions, Zed Barnes was so astounded at its simplicity that he raised the bid fifty rupees on a pair of treys and called and even forgot to cuss his stupidity.

The idea, as Slit Trench proposed it, was that a collection be taken up to endow Chota Peg for life; then we could turn him over to someone far away in Siam or Tibet to take care of for us. I never saw so much prompt generosity as was displayed that evening. The minimum contribution was ten rupees, and you could have heard the shouts of, "Lend me ten, quick, Zed!" all over the barracks. I have often wondered if Zed Barnes ever collected on that endowment fund of two hundred rupees which he laid out for Chota Peg. Not that it makes much difference: Zed never draws less than a full house or two pair.

Larkin Lyle offered to drive the endowment committee out to the village of Ghatsila, which was to be Chota Peg's new home, about twenty miles from our base. To make sure, the committee blindfolded Chota Peg and kept turning him around and around in the jeep just to confuse him more and more and discourage any idea of coming back.

Chota Peg's new guardian was a Christian and the father of one of our bearers. With many threats, Lyle and Slit Trench made him promise to treat Chota Peg well and not to let him start ambling off toward our base.

"It is that I will treat him like my own grandfather," assured old Takim.

"—, no! We don't want him buried!" snorted Slit Trench. "Treat him like your own grandson instead. Lookit all that baksheesh we give you."

The squadron breathed a collective sigh of relief when the endowment committee returned and reported the transaction. Soon we all forgot about Chota Peg and turned our attention to the lovable Penny, Tommy's Kerry blue terrier. And what a cute pup that Penelope was—until she grew up! Then she became a perambulating woolen ball and, like Chota Peg, had a liking for beds in the daytime. The G.I. influence sure gets into dogs early in India. At least Penny didn't howl and laugh with the jackals and hyenas at night. That was something.

Then Major Fawcett, the C.O. of the new R.A.F. Field near Ghatsila, called to pay his respects. Major Puckett invited him in with his friend, Captain Fleming, for a couple of drinks. They sat for an hour chewing the fat about experiences in the war, and, just as they were about to leave, Puck pressed about ten cartons of Rolled Mold cigarettes upon them. They were a dead loss to the PX anyway because nobody would buy them. Major Fawcett and Captain Flem-



ing were overcome with joy to get hold of some State-side cigarettes. Finally, the Major's face lit up.

"I say, old boy," he said to Puck, "I can't take all these fags for abso-jolly-lutely nothing, you know. Do let me give you something for them."

"Not a thing, suh!" said Puck sincerely. "Yo'-all will do us a fa—er—an honuh, suh."

"Well, that's jolly sportin' of you, old boy. By Jove! I say now, how would you like to have a cute pup? I bought him the other day in the village."

"Sho would 'preciate it, suh, yassuh!" said Puck with evident pleasure.

"Righto old boy," said Major Fawcett, and turning to Captain Fleming: "I say, Reggie, old thing, get Wuggles out of the car, what! I'm going to give the little blighter to the Major here as a present. Jolly good idea, what! What! What!"

"Capital! Capital! Reverse Lend-Lease, What ho!" said Reggie as he started toward the fine Buick station wagon (Lend-Lease). He opened the door, and out jumped the gift pup. What! What! What!

"Chota Peg!" gasped the boys in dismay.

And Chota Peg ambled up to Puck's door, looked lazily inside, and with unfailing intuition hopped on Puck's cot and went to sleep.

It wasn't long before we began to think of Fate and Chota Peg as twins. He was the cross we had to bear for ever having loved dogs, and we bore with him patiently and even heroically until the hot weather began. It can really get hot in a hurry in India, believe me! In January and February the weather had been magnificent—just like southern California at its best. The nights were cool, and the sleeping was good

when Chota Peg let us sleep. And never have I seen the moon as glorious as there at Chakulia in February. Then toward the middle of March a peculiar stillness seemed to hang in the air, as if all nature was waiting for something to explode. The brain fever bird put in his appearance and started driving us insane with his gin call, "Carewe! Carewe! Carewe!" in ever rising cadence until it seemed that the tops of our heads were going to pop off. Almost imperceptibly, faint rustlings began to stir from the southwest, and then bang! A hot blast hit us that shriveled the hair on our heads and made life a hell on earth. There was no sleeping now, Chota Peg or no Chota Peg. We moved from post to window and window to door and door to porch, trying to find a breath of air to survive on. Everything was so hot, even in the shade, that it was painful to touch anything. To cope with the heat, the work day was started at eight o'clock and ended at eleven-thirty. For the rest of the time we just lay around and gasped for air. Some of the boys managed to rig up punkahs which were worked on the outside by drooping natives. For weeks on end the temperature hovered between one-twenty and one-thirty in the shade, when there was shade. To top it off, our wells started running out so that water for showers had to be rationed to two hours a day. And even then it was only a trickle.

Chota Peg met the heat like a jackal. Every hour or so he rolled in a buffalo wallow and came up to the porch to shake himself, spattering a foul green slime over everybody and everything. There was something calculated about the whole thing, it seemed to us. He would go down to the wallow and roll in and close his eyes as if he were about to go to sleep; then suddenly he would spring up and rush to the porch and shake himself before any of us could escape inside: no one ever succeeded in getting inside in time. It was useless to

curse him; he would just look pained and hurt, as if he had been doing us a favor.

Soon there was talk of renewing the Chota Peg detail; but the heat killed whatever enthusiasm we might have mustered ordinarily. Besides, Chota Peg's wallowing was a lesser evil than a trip in a jeep in that weather. So we suffered Chota Peg almost patiently, although the fellows did add some remarkable new expressions to their fancy vocabularies. And how they damned and blasted Lynn!

Our salvation came so suddenly that it took us nearly two days to realize that it had actually happened. In short, Chota Peg was no more. Gone! Sent up the river for good! And the author of this humane deed was none other than that fount of wisdom and shady schemes, Chick Peeler. The way I got it was that Peeler drove the weapons carrier out to meet the mail plane, and when he went to sling the mail sacks into the plane he found Chota Peg sleeping on one of them. Very tenderly, Chick picked him up and dumped him in the mail plane when the pilot wasn't looking. If he was looking and saw the transfer, he kept his mouth shut because he thought he was getting an unexpected windfall; after all, old Chota Peg looked cute enough to kiss.

The 22nd boys were accustomed to throwing parties at the slightest provocation; and the exile of Chota Peg seemed provocation enough. The boys hauled out their gin and went over to the club to celebrate and to wish happy landing to the new owner of Chota Peg, whoever he might be. There was a strong desire to see the old pup with someone in H.Q. of the Tenth Air Force; some guy named Whistle or Kissel or something. I forget what it was that the boys specifically had against him. The next stop for Chota Peg was Agra, a thousand miles away. It was even possible that the pilot might take him all the way to Karachi, and some of the

fellows remotely wondered what the chances were that someone would take him all the way back to the States. Screwier things had happened, they said.

The high lights of the party were three bottles of Scotch Drambuie which someone racked off Roy Galloway of the Group Supply Department, and a ballad composed on the spot by Birch Williams, who also led the group in the singing of it. The ballad was dedicated to Chota Peg and was sung to the tune of "Lord Randall." Here are some of the words as I recall them:

THE BALLAD OF CHOTA PEG

Oh, where ha' ye been ye — blasted pup?  
Oh, where ha' ye been, now come on, 'fess up!

Oh, I've been with the jackals, Major,  
And I've run with hyenas, Major.  
Oh, Major, make your bed soon,  
For I'm weary wi' courting  
And fain would lie doon.

What did ye wi' jackals, ye bold Chota Peg?  
What did ye wi' jackals besides cock your leg?

Oh, I howled wi' the jackals, Major,  
And I laughed wi' hyenas, Major,  
Oh, Major, make your bed soon,  
For I'm weary wi' laughing  
And fain would lie doon.

I fear ye're a jackal yourself, Chota Peg.  
You're like a hyena and ought to be dead.

I'm none of a jackal, Major.  
Nor yet a hyena, Major.

Oh, Major, if this isn't rich!  
I'm just what you call me—  
A son of a bitch.

Toward the end of the evening the fellows became almost homesick for Chota Peg, just from talking about all his cussedness and his exploits. At last the consensus was reached that he was a hell of a fine pup—but! Since a war was on, we hadn't the time to fool with him and train him properly; and it was much better for him to have a home with some nice family up in Agra, or even Delhi.

The disappearance of Chota Peg effected a profound change around the place; every day now seemed like early Sunday morning. The fellows got to be quite civil to one another and freely offered gin, money, cigarettes, and even clothes. Just let a man remark audibly, "Son of a gun! I'm fresh out of booze!" and immediately half a dozen voices would call: "In here! I've got a couple bottles extra!" It was so sentimental and touching to see this great spirit of human brotherhood!

The improved morale was a good thing in every way, too. For one thing, we were expecting a couple of new crews in from the States to relieve the Tokyo boys; and I always like to see new men start out on the right foot. Good morale catches as easily as low morale, and, once caught, it tends to stick.

The two new crews finally showed up on the first of April, but at the time we saw no connection between their arrival and All Fools' Day. Temporarily we quartered them in the transient barracks, just east of the mess hall, with the intention of moving them over to our barracks as soon as the Tokyo boys pulled out. The boys made the newcomers feel quite at home, and we listened eagerly to their tales of how tough

things were getting back in the States. Even talking of eating horse meat, they said. Most of the boys opined that horse meat was probably worse than the jackalburgers we had been living on for the past couple of months, and some of us even blessed our lucky stars that we were in India and not in a tough spot like the United States.

During the talk on that first evening the new crews mentioned that they had stayed in Agra nearly a week getting some work done on their planes. Yes, they had seen the Taj Mahal and Fatehpur Sikri and all the other sights. They had even bought star sapphires from the bandits that hang out around the gates of the Taj. And oh, yes! One of the boys had bargained for and bought the cutest little pup imaginable. Just like a ball of wool. It didn't take us long to tell him what a dubious acquisition a pup could be on a base like ours, and we garnished our opinions with stories at some length about old Chota Peg.

"Why'n the — didn' you take the little bastard out in the brush and shoot him?" asked one of the new men, Dick Moore, in surprise.

The boys maintained an uncomfortable silence, so Dick continued:

"I sure would 'a' shot him. No — dog going to be a nuisance around me. No, sir!"

"Oh, —! You couldn't shoot old Chota Peg!" burst out Thompson. "Sure, he was worthless, but —, he was a white man's dog; not one of these flea-bitten Pi dogs they have around here. Like shooting your own people. Your brother even."

In the silence that followed, every man thought of old Chota Peg and what a good old pup he really was deep down in his heart. He just wasn't taught proper, that's all. And

every man felt a bit of a heel after what Thompson had said. I was thankful that I had had no hand in cursing old Chota Peg. If old Chota Peg were to show up right now, everything would be forgiven on the spot. Why, even the Major had a lump in his throat, thinking about him.

But Dick Moore couldn't see it. He went on to describe this cute pup he had picked up in Agra as a telling contrast to the uselessness of Chota Peg. "Understands English like a G.I.," he said. "And seemed to recognize a mess hall on sight. Smart! Why, I'm telling you! And quiet, too; all he wants to do is sleep all day. No trouble with him at all. Wish I could send him back to the States to my girl friend."

"Wheah you-all keep this heah dawg now?" Puckett's interest was the interest of politeness only.

"Got him tied on a rope outside the barracks," said Moore. "Going to let him run as soon's he gets used to the place."

"Yeah. Keep an eye on him for a while," agreed Tex McCook. "These — wogs'll steal him and sell him back to you a different color."

"Well, son of a gun! Here he comes now!" said Dick Moore in surprise. "Must of chewed himself loose."

We all looked in the direction of his gaze. A taffy-colored pup with two feet of rope around his neck was ambling toward us from the buffalo wallow.

"Chota Peg! — —! Inside, men!" roared the boys together.

But Dick Moore didn't make it. Chota Peg covered him with green slime. And Dick, who was going to shoot any dog that was a nuisance, could be heard saying, "You bad, bad puppy! Mustn't do!"

Chota Peg greeted every one of us effusively when finally we emerged. He blinked happily and then moved to Puck's doorway. He looked inside uncertainly for a moment and

then went and hopped lightly on one of the cots. The right one.

The party the 22nd boys threw that night to celebrate the return of Chota Peg was one of the best I've ever attended. We even got Helen Yavorsky and the rest of the nurses down.

We tolerated Chota Peg after that only because a worse evil had befallen us. The hot weather was driving most of the fauna into our barracks, where they decided to improve the shining hour by preparing for the spring production schedules. We were soon overrun with rats, mice, scorpions, snakes, and ants. But these were nothing to a nightmare which the Indians call *chachundar*. I first noticed the chachundar in the middle of one night. I woke up in a cold sweat from a dream of suffocation. When I finally got my wits about me, I was conscious of a most awful stench accompanied by a movement in my mosquito net. I flashed on my light and saw a black, ratlike creature dart under my wardrobe and out through the door. Most of the smell went with it. During the rest of the night I was awakened periodically every half-hour by that stinking horror trying to get into my bedding. Ye gods! It was vile; like a skunk in the final stages of putrefaction. I began to have an acute phobia that one time I shouldn't wake up soon enough and it would get into my bed.

The next day I told the boys about this odoriferous rat. They only smiled tolerantly and asked how my supply of communion wine was holding out; but the stench rat was no respecter of persons—in a few days they all were having trouble with it or them. Some of the less bright of the boys tried sleeping with their gas masks on and nearly died of suffocation. There was nothing to do but pass the buck on to Babu, the bearer.

"Babu, suh!" began Puckett. "Whut's this heah rat that stinks up the place heah ev'y night, suh?"



Babu looked discouraged and grave. "Indian feller he's call him chachundar, surr, E-stink rat. Not good, sur-r."

"Well, get 'em out f'om heah jildi! Cain' no man sleep roun' heah no mo'."

"Yes, surr! But chachundar is e-can't drive out, sur-r!"

"Why cain't yo'-all?"

"Chachundar is e-stubborn, sur-r. He's e-come back and come back many times, sur-r. You sleep outside, sur-r."

"—, no! Yo'-all get on the ball heah now and git this heah skunk outa heah, jildi!"

"Yes, sur-r!"

But Babu was even less than half-hearted. And he proved to be right, as usual. When a chachundar elects your room as his quarters, it takes some getting out. And nothing short of a mongoose will get it out. It is a type of shrew, I think, with a long snout and a rather stubby ratlike tail. And it stinks worse than a skunk all of the time—not just in spurts and jets.

Just when this chachundar was about to lose the war for us, old Chota Peg, the Scou—Boon of Chakulia, took a hand. Usually the chachundar worked at night when Chota Peg was out jackaling, so that their pathways never crossed. But early one morning Chota Peg wandered into Slit Trench Kelly's room looking for a vacant bed in which to bog down for the day. Suddenly he stiffened, gave three sniffs, and went instantly into action. The usually lazy Chota Peg was for the first time in his life a canine dynamo. Slit Trench was so stupefied that he got out of bed through his net instead of *under* it. His eyes were fixed on Chota Peg, who was whining and scratching to get behind the wardrobe. Automatically, Slit Trench moved over and gave the wardrobe a heave and out darted a chachundar and scuttled under the dresser with old Chota Peg on his trail like a bloodhound.

"Larkin!" yelled Slit Trench. "Up quick! It's Chota Peg!"  
"Wassermarrer Chota Peg?"

"Get up, you dope! It's Chota Peg! He's a born chachundar hound. Quick! Gimme a lift with this dresser!"

Larkin Lyle was wide awake in a jiffy. Together they moved on the dresser, Chota Peg meanwhile sniffing and scratching to get behind it.

"Now git him, Chota Peg. Watch him, boy!" whispered Slit Trench as they heaved on the dresser.

"There the stinker goes!" yelled Lyle. "—! He's gone under the wardrobe. Let's move the wardrobe, quick!"

Chota Peg and the boys ran that chachundar back and forth from the wardrobe to the dresser for nearly an hour without so much as getting in a crack at him.

"Let's take time out and think this thing over," suggested Slit Trench finally.

That's how I found them: completely naked, sweating streams, and sitting on a foot locker. Chota Peg was whining and scratching furiously behind the dresser.

"Come, now, fellows," I said, "it isn't that hot, surely."

"It's the chachundar, Chaplain," said Lyle. "We got him trapped."

"You mean he's in that foot locker?" I said with surprise. "Then you'd better bring it outside and burn it."

"He ain't in the foot locker; he's behind the wardrobe or the dresser. Which one is it, Slit Trench?"

"— if I know. Ask Chota Peg."

"What are you going to do now?" I asked.

"Get our breath first. Then we're going to block up all the goddam furniture in this room so Chota Peg can get under it when that bastard comes out from behind the wardrobe next time." Larkin mopped his brow with the back of his hand.

"What can I do to help?" I asked.

"Round up a bunch of chairs and boxes to prop this stuff up with," said Slit Trench.

We propped up the dresser and one of the foot lockers and got all set to move the wardrobe again.

"Now watch him, Chota Peg, ol' boy! Here we go!" breathed Larkin. "Oopsadaisy!"

Out came the chachundar and nimbly ducked behind the other foot locker.

"We got him now. You grab that end, Larkin, and heave up all of a sudden. Oops! —! There he goes behind the — wardrobe again. Chota Peg, why'n the — don't you get the lead outa your pants! This — Wog skunk got me wore down to a frazzle already," complained Slit Trench. "Wait a minute, Larkin. Let's get more chairs and boxes and put all this junk up in the air, and give old Chota a free run on this — honey mouse."

"—! If I was a dog," said Lyle, "I never would want to touch one of these stinkers. No, sir! Old Chota's sure got guts. Got Irish in him all right, only it took a long time to show up."

"Yeah. I never did want to get rid of him," lied Slit Trench. "That was just Puck's screwy idea just 'cause old Chota slept in his bed a coupla times. Let's go, men."

We put all the furniture up on stilts except the wardrobe behind which the chachundar was now hiding. We figured we could hold that up in the air long enough for Chota Peg to get in and do the kill.

"Watch it this time, fellows," I warned.

"There he goes!" yelled Larkin. "Oof! —! Don't put it down on my foot!" he continued, trying to get his toes out without skinning them.

The chachundar was on the run all right. He made a com-

plete circle around the walls of the room, looking for something to duck under, and old Chota was yelping in hot pursuit. But we had forgotten to close the door, and the chachundar just loped right on out through it and into Puckett's room, where Chota Peg spent the rest of the day trying to rout him out.

Lyle and Kelly had worked so hard moving the furniture that they had to go back to bed for the rest of the day to sleep the sleep of the just. At noon old Babu brought them some lunch, but he gave them no encouragement for their labors. He shook his head firmly and said: "Chachundar is e-come back and come back."

"Like — he will after the workout us and Chota Peg gave him this A.M.," said Slit Trench.

Thereafter the barracks was a bedlam, what with Chota Peg sniffing behind the heavy pieces of furniture and the boys rushing in to move them so that he could get after the chachundars. The furniture was nearly worn out from constant moving before the boys finally adopted Lyle's and Kelly's scheme of propping it up on boxes to give Chota Peg a free run. But in about two weeks old Chota had cleared the entire barracks of chachundars, and he was keeping up an active vigilance to boot. From the fellows he was getting plenty of cooperation, too: verbal, muscular, and gustatory.

"What kind of a mutt you call that?" asked Sorensen of the 491st one evening as the men were sitting outside, working over the beer ration.

"A genuine Bihari chachundar spaniel," said Slit Trench pridefully. "And the silicest ol' pup in all India. Yes, sir! Look, out, fellows! He's coming out of that — wallow again. Inside, quick!"

But Lyle didn't make it. "Chota Peg," he said, wiping a wad of green slime from his ear, "Chota Peg you son of a—

Good ol' Chota Peg! Come on, ol' boy! Chachundars! Sick 'em!" And Chota Peg rushed from room to room, putting the sniff on every one of them.

In a way, the chachundars were a blessing in disguise. They got all the boys to working so that their appetites improved, and they overworked Chota Peg to such an extent that he slept all night long and gave up his jackaling. Nothing more was ever said about shanghaiing him up the river, and when I heard Puckett remark one evening, "Lookit 'at good ol' Chota Peg! Sick 'em, boy!" I knew the little rascal was in solid for good. The only worry now is whether we'll get sent home before Penelope has her pups—Chota Peg's pups. Suppose there are eight of them, and they are all like Chota Peg!

## MOVING UP

OUR base in Bihar was rapidly becoming useless to us because we had bombed all targets within range to dust. A new base was being built for us in Bengal which would put us a few hundred miles nearer the Japs. We had spent one hot season at this base in Bihar, which wasn't so far from one of the places described by Richard Halliburton as one of the hottest places in the world; so we were glad to be on the move.

Much of our equipment had been sent on up to the new base by plane; but we still had a lot of heavy equipment which had to be transported by freight train. I managed to get in on this train trip—a break for me, because I was eager to see as much of India as I could.

We left Bihar just as the monsoons were getting into their stride: water was everywhere. The train was snailing along upcountry. The engineer had done everything humanly possible to avoid arriving at our destination, it seemed. He made it a basic principle to stop for a half-hour every fifteen miles to let the wheels cool off. He was afraid that the terrific heat generated by tearing along at ten miles an hour would melt them right off the axles. At every water tower he stopped for an hour or two, and he made it a point never to go through a station without stopping for a consultation with the stationmaster and the signalman. Every time the train stopped, we got out and made tea with hot water procured from the engine.

The boys had read everything they could get their hands on. They had played poker until Peeler had won all their

money twice, and right now they were sweating out a third loan in the hope that they could win it back. A vain hope. Nobody ever won anything back from Peeler. Finally they fell to talking.

"We sure was dumb when we come here fust," said Greenwald. "We was on the sea bound for the Philippines when the Japs hit Pearl Harbor. So they switched us to India by way of Australia."

At the mention of Australia he broke out into smiles. What a time he must have had there!

"Fust time we took a gharry in Karachi we got our eyelids upped," continued Greenwald. "We docks at nine o'clock A.M. in the morning, and pretty soon we learns that we can't get off until three in the afternoon. Which means we got to eat another meal of the Limey chow they give for the last three weeks. Greasy mutton! We threw so much greasy mutton overboard that finally the sea gulls give up and went away."

"Not on our boat, they didn't," said Dennison. "If we refused to eat the — stuff one meal, they give it to us the next."

"Sure did," agreed Peeler, shuffling the cards as if he were about to weaken.

"Well, anyway," continued Greenwald, "we was so hungry for a decent bit of chow that the boys got together and talked it over. Then Roper suggests that a bunch of us sneak off to town and bring back some chow which is fit to eat. I ain't never seen a guy as smart as this guy Roper. He was always like that.

"They picks four of us to do the job. Beans and bacon, eggs, tomatoes, and apple pie, that's what they orders. Only no mutton, they warns. We got off the boat, all right, and snuck over the tracks to the road and picked up one of these

horse cabs—gharries, you know. We don't know a word about this Wog language, so when the old guy says, 'Elphinstone Street,' we nods.

"And camels! Never see so many camels in all my life. And all the camel wagons got rubber tires on 'em. We rides through all this camel traffic for close to ten minutes and then the driver stops somewhere on Bunder Road and lets us off.

" 'How much, Joe?' I asks him.

" 'Twelve,' he says.

" 'Ten,' I says.

" 'Twelve, sahib. Long way,' he says.

" 'Not a — cent more'n ten rupees,' I says, 'cause I know how these foreign niggers are. Not honest, like our niggers.

" '*Teek hai*. Ten rupees, sahib,' he says quick. And we all ups and pays him ten rupees each. He says twenty cents and we pays him ten dollars. —!" And Greenwald grinned ruefully while the others chuckled over similar experiences.

"Wonder what he did with all that dough?" Peeler was shuffling the cards as if he'd like to meet the gharry driver for a showdown.

"Never did see him again, although I was around Karachi a lot. My hunch is he sold his wagon and took a pilgrimage to Mecca. My name should 'a' been Green, not Greenwald," he continued, stretching out his legs.

The train was still in motion, as anybody could clearly see by looking at the ground. The rice fields were lakes of muddy water through which the lovable old buffalo plodded patiently, churning up the mess.

There is no animal on earth that will arouse such sympathy and admiration as the water buffalo. He lives in a world apart, a marvelous example of bovine schizophrenia. You can prod him, beat him, starve him, overwork him, but his ex-



pression of baby innocence never changes. He sticks his nose way out in an expression of sublime Dagwood contentment, and he trundles his huge bulk along with a tread that is measured from the time the world began. Nothing can speed him up or slow him down. He picks each foot up, and, after holding it in the air somewhere, he puts it down suddenly, *kerplotch!* He moves each foot deliberately and independently; and he'll kill a tiger with hardly any effort. His tremendous horns can slash with speed and accuracy. And when they slash they leave a four-foot breach in whatever they slash at. It is nothing to see a tot four or five years of age leading the biggest of them around by a piece of string. And that has always amused me about this formidable creature; he is an overgrown pup. Let him see a mud puddle, and down he goes, trying to get all but his eyes and nose under. At such times he looks so foolish that our boys just have to pause to laugh at him. Many a native has had the tamping of his life for beating a water buffalo in full view of our boys. What infuriates us is the patent fact that it does not the slightest bit of good. The buffalo has only one speed: slow. And if we in our short stay here have noticed that fact, then surely the natives know it. Never have we seen one hurry in response to punishment. It makes absolutely no difference.

We looked bleakly out of the train window at the plodding buffalo and their native drivers.

"Wonder if they'll ever get any place?" remarked Dennison, nodding toward the natives in the field.

"Not a chance," said Greenwald emphatically. "Once," he went on, "I was all for 'em. 'Kick the Limeys out,' I said to all and sundry. Then I changed my mind a bit and said, 'Kick the Limeys.' Now that I know the wogs and Limeys better, I just say, 'Kick.' And I been kickin' ever since."

"Had dinner with Jim Pierce in Jamshedpur one night," said Muddy. "I never saw so many servants in a house in my life. His house ain't so big, so I wonders. 'How come, Jim?' I says to him after we was sittin' under the fans. Then Jim tells me. One sweeps the floors, he tells me, but his caste won't allow him to clean the bathroom. So another has to be hired to clean the bathroom. The guy that cleans the bathroom can't enter the cowshed to milk the cows, or he'd make them unclean; and the other servants would leave the place. So he has to have a guy to look after the cowshed. But this guy can't touch the garden because that would make him unclean. So he has to get a gardener to take care of that little plot of ground. Another one does the cooking, but he can't do the shopping. And so it goes on. 'A vast trade union is what it is,' says Jim. 'And you can't break it. And so you employ a dozen servants to do the work of two. And sometimes,' says Jim, 'the servants all go with a house and not with the tenants.' One of his friends rented a house from a chap who went into the army. This guy didn't want to keep any of them, so he fired them and brought his own servants. But he had to fire his own servants and rehire the old ones. And why? Because the tradesmen in the bazaar wouldn't sell the cook anything. In short, the whole native community was in cooperation against them. There was nothing for him to do if he didn't want to starve but to get the old servants back."

"I'd put wheels under 'em pretty — quick," boasted Peeler. "That's what's wrong with this — country: everybody pamperin' their fool castes."

"It goes deeper than you think, Peeler," said Taylor quietly. "Look now. I went through the steelworks at Tata with Haines, a fellow from Gary, Indiana. One of their big problems, he tells me, is training new men to take over the super-

vision of sections of the plant. The only way to train a man is to put him on the job under a man who already knows the angles. Well, what happens? All right: They pick out a likely chap who shows he has the makings, and they put him in the job under an older man so's he can learn the ropes. And what happens? The older man is a Bengali; the new guy is a Punjabi. The Bengali will not teach the Punjabi anything. Or if he does, he teaches it to him incorrectly. And it isn't only the Bengalis and Punjabis; it's all of them. A guy from one state will not teach a guy from another state. He doesn't come out and say it, he just sees to it that the new guy gets into every kind of trouble. And they don't want to employ just all Bengalis, or all the other employees get on their high horse and they have a riot in the plant."

The train had to stop again, and we opened the doors and swung out to stretch our legs. Our curiosity was suddenly aroused by two natives who worked from car to car of a freight train parked on the other track. One of the men had a long-handled hammer with which he struck each wheel. The other merely stooped as the first one struck. We couldn't make head or tail of the business. Nearer and nearer they came, and more and more intent we became.

"Maybe they're a pair of yogis practicing the Anvil Chorus," suggested Taylor. "Or perhaps they're trying to hit the right note so they can start the day right."

"Hey, Joe! Kaunsa this business?" yelled Greenwald, the linguist.

The men straightened up and smiled. The one in the white loincloth touched his forehead and said, "Salaam! We ar-re examiner-r-rs, sur-r-r."

"But why are there two of you, and why do you bend down?"

"This man with the hammer, sur-r-r, is my assistant. I am

the examiner-r-r. He is low-caste, sur-r. He uses hammer. But it is I who listens, sur-r-r."

We looked at one another in bewilderment. This was carrying the caste division of labor to the utmost extreme. Then the full import of the situation dawned upon us. Listening involves making a judgment. And making a judgment involves intellectual effort. And intellectual effort is the domain of the upper castes. Physical labor is the domain of the lower castes. Under the caste system, both men were absolutely essential, and each was as convinced of his indispensability as the other, and the whole society was convinced of the indispensability of both.

"Well, I'll be —!" said Peeler.

"That's the way it is all over India," I said. "When we were engaged in building the revetments at the last post, one group of men carried the dirt in baskets on their heads to the site, and they handed it to another group of men who dumped it out and spread it. Carrying the dirt was coolie work; spreading it was a form of skilled labor. And, to complicate things, they demanded ten separate drinking tanks, one for each separate group. Steve got it down to four after a lot of arguing, but that was as low as he dared go without trouble."

"Well, that beats all," said Cue-Ball.

"It's a problem, all right," I continued, "and no doubt it contributes to the backwardness of India. One must really have lived here to grasp it. You see, the bases of independent government, and therefore democracy, are a common language and a common purpose which lay the groundwork for what we call a consensus, a thinking together. These things must exist over and above petty differences. Otherwise a united nation is practically impossible of achievement."

The train whistled for a new start, and we scrambled aboard to sweat out the next station, only a couple of miles

up the track, where we hoped we could get good water. The fellows settled back in their seats; so I began again.

"Now take India—"

"No, you take it!" the response was unanimous.

"I want no part of it, no time, nohow, never!" said Peeler fervently.

A chorus of "Me neither!" greeted this outburst.

I smiled and continued. "Now take India. India has about four hundred and fifty scheduled or recognized castes above the untouchables; about five hundred native states, dozens and dozens of language groups; many, many religious groups; scores of political groups. Germany had dozens of political groups, and so they got Hitler," I added; "and for the same reason: no consensus was possible."

"Yeah! Divide and rule. That's the British all over," commented Dennison.

"And that, Dennison, brings me to my next point. There are two things to be kept in mind: our interest in the welfare of the average Indian, and the best means of assuring that welfare.

"We know why the British are here—economic interests. But don't let prejudice blind us to the fact that their being here does confer some benefits, incidentally to be sure, but real none the less. There is law and order, and there has been quite a bit of legislation to protect the peasant from the moneylender and the landlords—the zamindars. Many of the political parties which are anti-British draw considerable support from these people whose sole interest is repeal of the protective laws. Of course they mask their interests under the 'India for the Indians' slogan. And it makes a very effective appeal to Americans," I added, "who once had to fight a despotic king for their freedom."

"Maybe you got something there, Chaplain. I'll admit I

never think of it like that," confessed Greenwald, smooching around, as usual. "They is wogs which pulls the shakedown on other wogs, all right, like when Steve caught Benny the Brahmin. You remember that, sir?"

"Indeed I do. Let me tell you fellows about it:

"I drove into town with Steve one day. Steve wanted to pick up a package from the Indian post office; so I sat in the jeep outside and waited. You know how speedy those boys are in the post office. While I was sitting there wiping sweat from my eyes and cussing that insufferable brain-fever bird across the road, up came a chap dressed all in white. Looked clean and nice and rather handsome.

"'Good morning, sur-r,' he said.

"'Salaam, sahib,' I replied. Funny how we reverse the languages, isn't it?

"'You are a priest,' he said, looking at my shirt collar.

"'And what are you,' I asked him.

"'A Brahmin. A Bengali Brahmin. All the men at the camp know me. They loves me much. I have work for them, you see.'

"'Really! That must have been before I came.'

"'Last month I work for them. Now I have no position. Will you help me get this work job again, sur-r?'

"A Brahmin, I said to myself, and decided to have a little fun with him. 'What is your name?' I asked him.

"'Bannerjee. They call me Benny, my American friends; they loves me much.'

"'That's fine, Benny. Will you work for me?'

"'I will serve you well, sur-r. What is this work?'

"'I want a couple of slit trenches dug outside my quarters.'

"'I will come with my men tomorrow, sur-r. Thank you, sur-r.'

"'Now wait,' I said, 'I don't want any men. I just want *you*.'

It won't take more than two or three hours for a husky young man like you. Bring one pick and one shovel.'

"Benny smiled at me sorrowfully. 'I cannot touch it, the shovel, sur-r.'

" 'And why not? I thought you said you wanted work.'

" 'I am a Brahmin, sur-r, a contractor. I do not the work myself. I will bring seven men—'

" 'But I want you to do it.'

" 'It is degrading, sur-r. The Brahmins cannot do it.'

" 'What's all this about being a Brahmin,' I asked innocently. 'You look like any other Indian to me.'

" 'The Brahmins were appointed in the times of ancient by the kings to look after the good of the people. Today the Brahmin loves his people, but he is not only the priest now; he gets work for them. So I am contractor.'

" 'Well, then,' I said, 'be my bearer. I need a bearer.'

"Benny looked twice as sorrowful. 'I am sorry. It cannot be. The bearer, he sweeps and cleans dirt. I would be unclean.'

" 'Then take a bath every day,' I said, pulling his leg. But he caught on to that and just laughed.

"He meant well. The caste system makes it nice for him. It provides him with a beautiful excuse to avoid real, sweaty work. His system was to charge me two rupees a man per day and pay a quarter of a rupee to each man—eight cents.

" 'What kind of a god do you believe in, Benny?' I asked, changing the subject. 'Do you believe in one God like we do?'

" 'Yes, yes, of course! I am devotee of goddess Kali.'

" 'But I thought you said you believed in one God!'

" 'I do. But God has many manifestations. The manifestation I worship is Kali.'

"Perhaps some of you chaps visited the Temple of Kali in Calcutta. It is situated at one of the mouths of the Ganges,

and to it the pilgrims flock by the thousand. First they bathe in the filthy water of the river, which is colorful with its mass of floating garbage, and then they repair to the Temple of Kali to pray. After they have discharged their duties in the temple, which consist mainly of wailing and howling at the statue of Kali, they visit the curio shops within the compound to buy trinkets and have their pockets picked by the best gang of professional dips in the world. The day I visited the temple I was followed persistently by a pair of these rascals; and, try as I would, I could not get them ahead of me, nor could I lose them. I shook them off by a surprise maneuver. Turning suddenly on my heel I bellowed in their faces, '*Jau! Jildi!*' and shook my fist under their noses. They left at once.

"The goddess was horrible. She was portrayed with two pairs of arms; the left hands were held out as if in blessing, whereas the right fists were clenched ready to strike. Her tongue hung out down to her chin. The story the natives tell is that Kali, in one of her rages, stamps upon the earth in an effort to destroy it. To save the world, her husband, Siva, places his body between the stamping feet of Kali and the poor old earth. Kali looks down and sees him there, and, like a shrewish hussy, she sticks her tongue out at him.

"So you worship Kali, eh, Benny? How do you go about it?"

"Sur-r, to worship Kali is to live the honest, pure life. Every month it is that I go to my prayer room from sunrise to sunset, not speaking, not eating, not drinking, not seeing any people. There I sit and think of the great problems of universe; the great problem of life which is my chief interest, for I am not interest in politics or anything else."

"And what is this great problem of life, Benny? I would say "problems," not "problem.""



“‘No. There is only one problem. You see, we believe that to be born is to be misery and in suffering,’ said Benny, quaintly getting his prepositions out of place. ‘So the best is not to be born at all. But we will be born if we are of evil life now. So I pray on this problem so I am try to be perfect and never be born again but be always with God.’

“‘And if you are very bad in this life?’ I prompted.

“‘Then in the next life I will be born lower—an animal, perhaps. Yes, even a rat. Perhaps a rat.’ Benny squirmed.

“‘But does Kali listen to your prayers, Benny?’

“‘Oh, yes, without doubt!’

“‘How do you know?’

“‘By secret things which I must not say. Kali shows herself to me very much. Yes, very much.’

“‘Can’t you tell me some of them, Benny?’

“‘My Preceptor, who is now in Calcutta, he tells me I must not say these things which Kali does.’

“‘Who is this Preceptor, Benny?’

“‘Sur-r, he is Yogi Sen Anda. It is he has taught me many things, even the secret magic Sanskrit words which cures aching muscles. What you think,’ pursued Benny, ‘if your muscles are ache and I say magic words and it is cure? These things I can do.’

“‘Let’s have a demonstration, Benny. My knees ache from waiting here in this jeep. How about a little yoga on me?’

“‘No. You are make the fun. But it is so.’

“‘But how about Kali, Benny? What does she do to you?’

“‘What you think now, if you buy a teapot, and when you bring this home, it has changed its shape but is not broken?’

“‘I’d say I bought a rubber one.’

“‘No. It is not rubber. It is china. Then what you say?’

“‘Did this happen to you, Benny?’

“‘It has happened to me. Many times. But of once I will

tell you and see your reactions to this. In my prayer room I have a picture of Kali before which I make my puja.\* So I say, this year on Kali Puja I will buy an image like this picture. So I went to my friend and showed him the picture of Kali in an active pose, and I make the price for the image to be five rupees. Then on the day of the Puja I go to get my image; but my friend is sick in bed and has not made. So I must buy a ready-made image which has not the action in the body. It is very stiff. But I make my puja, and there before my eyes the image changes shape to like the one I order from my friend. And it is made of cement plaster. Now how do you explain this, sur-r?'

" 'I can't, Benny,' I said. I could see he was as serious as a retreat.

" 'It is there is no explanation,' continued Benny. 'But many such things they have happen to me, but my Preceptor tell me not to reveal them because the goddess meant them only for me as personal experiences.'

" 'It's interesting, all right, Benny. Do you know any more stories?'

" 'It is not stories, sur-r, it is truth. How you explain this: For many months my landlord say to me, "Bannerjee, move! I want my house." But because of refugees from Burma I cannot move. Houses are not available now. Then a fortnight ago I met my landlord and he say, "Bannerjee, you are rascal—you are not try to find house!" And he insult me. So I go to my prayer room, and then I had the vision. I got up and went straight to a nice house on Islampur Road, and the door it was open by an old woman. She say, "I have wait for you." "How did you know I would come?" I tell her. She say, "I see you in a vision, and Kali tell me to rent only to you. So

\* Worship, or celebration. Kali Puja is the annual festival of the goddess, which comes in autumn.

I wait and I turn many away. Now you are here, and for you the rent is twenty-seven rupees a month." How you explain this, sur-r? Many peoples have offered her seventy-five rupees a month because the houses they are scarce, but she wait for me and give me the rent for twenty-seven rupees. I cannot pay it more than twenty-seven rupees, either.'

"'I have no explanation, Benny,' I said. 'Have you an explanation?'

"'Yes, I am devotee of the pure, noble life without wickedness and sin. These things happen to those who live like this.'

"Steve finally came out of the post office.

"'Hello, Benny!' he said. 'Got a new job yet?'

"Without waiting for an answer he got into the jeep, and we drove off.

"'Quite a boy, Benny,' said Steve as he shifted into high gear. 'Heaven help the States if he ever gets to Chicago.'

"'How so?' I asked.

"'We had him working for us, and we would still have him, too, if we hadn't caught up with him.'

"'What's the story?' I asked.

"'Oh, we were paying him a hundred and twenty-five rupees a month as a straw boss on the runways. Then we found out he was shaking down the coolies on the job two rupees a week in order to keep their jobs. He threatened to fire them if they didn't pay. Of course they paid. They thought he really did the firing.'

"'Are you sure?' I asked. Benny seemed too much of an idealist for that.

"'We got the goods on him, all right. Rutnam, my bearer, tipped me off; so I set a trap for him on pay day. We watched him collect from twenty coolies, and then we picked him up and brought in the coolies. They all told the same story.'

I divided his pay among the coolies to cover past extortion and kicked him out. Oh, we love him, all right,' Steve laughed.

" 'And what will Benny be in his next life, Steve?' I asked.

" 'Just what he is now,' grinned Steve. 'A rat.'

"Perhaps I've made this whole Indian problem sound worse than it is," I said. "Perhaps the coming of the Americans will lead to far-reaching changes. At least they seem to know how we do things, and in many instances we have made them do things our way. More than that, these people have observed our democracy in action. I say, then, that our influence will be all for the good, particularly upon the younger generation."

A little girl on the platform caught my eye as the train came to a stop. I smiled kindly at her and nodded. She promptly went to work on this kindly gesture.

"Salaam, sahib, you son of a bitch," she yelled cheerfully. "Salaam, sahib! Get the hell outa here, sahib. Four annas baksheesh, sahib."

Was my face red! From past experience we knew she would keep it up innocently until the train pulled out again. All the fellows grinned, and no wonder! "Our influence will be all for the good" was still ringing in their ears.

To end an awkward and embarrassing situation, Greenwald tossed the youngster a coin. That was a fatal error. A horde of kids came tearing up, and what they shouted wouldn't pass the censor!

The freight train to which our coach was attached had been shunted by mistake on a siding at a small upcountry town. The C.O. had gone to argue with the authorities about it, which is what he had been doing for nearly a week now, and some of us were killing a little time by wandering

aimlessly over this extremely mine-run Bengal hovel. An assortment of boys and girls trailed us at a respectful distance, and once in a while one of the girls would sneak up and whisper, "Jig-jig." We never did figure out what it meant, so the boys threw them cigarettes. Every town we came to, the women came up and said, "Jig-jig," and when the men came on the scene they took off like scared frogs, being booted occasionally. Perhaps they objected to their women smoking American cigarettes. That was a laugh! The stuff which they smoked was putrid.

Suddenly we heard a most pitifully plaintive cry: *Mreh-eh-eh-eh! Mreh-eh-eh-eh-eh!* It yanked on our heartstrings like a cathedral bell ringer. *Mreh-eh-eh-eh! Mreh-eh!*

"It must be a little lamb lost from its mother," said Greenwald, almost in tears.

*Mreh-eh-eh! Mreh-eh-eh-eh-eh! Mreh!*

"—! I can't stand it any longer," said Cue-Ball. "Let's find it and do the needful and oblige."

We hesitated. After all, we were here fighting a war, not playing nursemaid to a lost lamb.

*Mreh! Mreh-eh-eh!*

That ended our indecision. War or no war, one had to be kind to helpless little things. We turned toward the cry with resolute steps. As we rounded a corner, there before us was not a lamb, but a crowd of people squatting in quiet fascination around a street magician. We promptly forgot the little lamb to join the throng. We couldn't understand a word of what the magician was babbling, but it seemed evident that he was in the middle of a disappearing act.

A chubby little boy—his son, probably—was the subject. The boy made more noise than the old man, and at times it seemed as if he were running the whole show. Anyway, they

capered and cavorted and did all kinds of nonsense to drag the show out. Our boys were getting a bit tired of watching all the nonsense.

Finally, the boy climbed into a large pyramid-shaped basket without a lid, and the old man covered it with a large, black cloth. There followed another dose of jiggery-pokery designed to amuse and mystify the crowd of simple-minded folk—but which definitely wasn't going to impress or deceive our fellows, for they organized on the spot to see that no nonsense was pulled off. They posted chaps on all sides of the basket and admonished them to keep their "peepers peeled" for a fast one. They jacked the yogi up a little bit, too.

"Ready on the right! Ready on the left!" they yelled at intervals.

This fellow was surely killing time. I began to think maybe he wasn't a yogi after all. He never sat down and crossed his legs as they do in the pictures, and he looked well fed, too. He was dressed in the usual "dark white" robes with a very baggy skirt. His head was wound around with a turban. Altogether, his appearance was one of craftiness. He was in striking contrast to his audience, which apart from the G.I.'s, was made up mainly of simple village folk, all naked except for the loincloth. They squatted around on their haunches in the middle of the street, their arms crossed, with the palms of their hands on their knees—a position they can assume for hours and hours without getting tired. In fact, they work in this position, and they rest in this position.

Our boys enjoyed watching the crowd as much as they enjoyed the swami. The little boys would edge up closer and closer to the G.I.'s, while their little sisters would be frantically trying to coax them away from these mysterious sahibs. Occasionally, one of our boys would spin around and shout,

"Boo!" and the kids would tumble over themselves in their haste to get away.

Poor as they were, these natives are not ungenerous. The traveling magicians are often their only form of amusement, and they are paid well, considering the poverty of these people. Indeed, there couldn't be such an appalling number of beggars in India, were the Hindus niggardly.

How we wished the yogi would cut the nonsense and do the needful and oblige! "The needful and oblige!" How I've laughed over that silly phrase. Every Indian uses it. If he writes a letter, he is sure to close with it. The joke is that it was copied from the British, who use it only when writing to a friend for a touch. The Indians don't understand the background of it at all.

At last the yogi looked as if he were going to do something drastic. He waved his wand and tapped the basket with it several times. Then he stopped and called to the boy, and he answered. Again he called, and again he answered, but this time his voice sounded two blocks away. He called a third time, and this time we could hardly hear the kid; he seemed miles away. It was either a fine bit of ventriloquism, or there were accomplices placed a few blocks away. The yogi seemed satisfied with the progress so far, so he clapped his hands and started working his way into the basket under the black cloth. He got just the lower part of his body in; then he cracked some more jokes with the crowd, and all of them looked at us and laughed joyfully.

"That son of a gun ain't foolin' me none," growled Greenwald. "I'm goin' to watch him too — close."

The yogi finally climbed out of the basket and walked over to two large monkeys tied to one wheel of the bullock cart which served as his back-stage. And there, by gosh, was our lost lamb—or rather, kid. The cutest little black

goat you ever saw was tied to the other wheel of the cart nibbling away at some green stuff. He was quiet now, thank heaven! The yogi untied the monkeys and went into a simian version of Punch and Judy with them. It was evident he was stalling around, waiting for us to go. Our fellows started to get boisterous and began calling his hand, but he ignored them and went on with the Punch and Judy number. He yelled to the crowd and they all looked at us and laughed again. Sure! It was all a part of the show—calling the attention of the crowd to the fact that these sahibs were as curious as kids. Old Greenwald could stand it no longer. He walked over to the basket and pulled the cloth off and looked in. Then he looked closer; then still closer. Finally he picked the basket up as if it were empty. It was! Greenwald even got his head and shoulders in it, and then had a heck of a time getting it off. But it was empty. No doubt about it.

The boys looked at one another and exchanged bright comments.

"Well, I'll be —!" said Greenwald. "I told you guys to keep an eye on him!"

It was most baffling. There was no way that youngster could have gotten out of that basket without our seeing him. Cue-Ball drew plenty of derision when he went over and examined the ground for a trapdoor.

"Oh, sure," scoffed Peeler, "he dug his way out with a trench spade."

The crowd howled with delight at our obvious discomfiture, and when the yogi yelled and the boy answered from afar, their joy was complete. In a couple of minutes the youngster broke through the crowd and ran up to the basket and got in again, motioning to us to come and find him there. The audience went into paroxysms of mirth over our stupidity. This was no trick! This was a calculated scheme



to make the greatest and smartest nation on earth look like a bunch of simpletons. And it succeeded. The inference is clear: How could a bunch of fools like us stand up against Orientals? Why, the Japanese would make playthings of us. I wondered how much Japanese propaganda was spread by traveling magicians?

We were rescued from a painful situation by the little goat—Billy the Kid, as Cue-Ball appropriately named him. He had finished his greens and was voicing that heart-rending cry again. The boys went and made a fuss over him, and he responded with the nicest soft sounds that sounded like *Mrub! Mrub, mruh! Mrub, mruh! Mrub! Mrrrrr!*

"If you are like, sahib, I will make the little goat disappear," said the yogi, with a grin that looked like a gash in a hunk of liver. Our interest in Billy the Kid evidently suggested a new way for him to embarrass us.

"O.K. by us, Yogi," said Greenwald. "We ain't stoppin' you."

Yogi let forth a stream of Bengali, and the crowd clapped its delight. It took the old rascal ten minutes to get through the preliminary hocus-pocus of rattling his drums and waving his wand, and the fellows jacked him up a bit again. Finally he called the boys forward, and we stood around rather sheepishly while he had Greenwald put the goat into the basket. Billy the Kid let out a final *Mreh-eh-eh-eh!* which almost made us change our minds, but we steeled our hearts and let the appeal pass. The old boy almost got a kick in the pants from Peeler when he started herding us around the basket and slapping us contemptuously with his wand. But we surely must have looked like a gang of ninnies to the natives, for they were grinning from ear to ear.

At last the yogi retired to the center of the ring and sat down. He rattled his miniature hand drum and began to

harangue the crowd, no doubt dwelling upon the stupid expressions we would display when he had snatched the goat away under our very noses. The boys were getting impatient, and he noticed it, too. With a flourish of his wand, he got up and moved over to the basket. He danced around it a few times, thwacking it with his wand, and finally he started to get in it as he had done with the boy.

"Did you guarded it much careful, sahibs?" he leered.

We nodded foolishly. I knew the goat must be in the basket, because the old boy hadn't touched it until now. And as far as I could see there was no chance of its being smuggled out; for our boys had been around it most of the time. Greenwald, I know, never took his eyes off it, even when the rest of us did. So it must be in there.

"Hoola boo!" yelled the yogi to the crowd. "Hoola b—"

"Oh, oh!" I said. "Now what's happened?"

It was evident that something had; for yogi was looking wildly about. He jumped out of the basket and began to feel around inside with his hands. He held the basket upside down. No goat! I mean that; no goat! He was looking completely bewildered, and the crowd laughed more than ever. It was evident that he was mocking the expressions we had shown when the boy disappeared. There was no getting away from it, it was a good trick, and the simulated consternation was exceedingly well done. He had me fooled for a minute, until I caught on. The other fellows, too.

"Did you see where it went?" I asked Cue-Ball.

"—, no! And I had my peepers on it all the time, sir."

All of us were stumped. "Must of been mass hypnotization," said Lefty Lefkovic. "I seen a guy do it back home. There never was no goat. He only makes us think they is, see?"

I couldn't see. Neither could any of the others. But ap-

parently there was no other explanation. Well, soon he'd have to bring the goat back, and then we could check on it to see if it was a real goat. The gang had settled on the mass hypnosis theory, anyway; so there was nothing to do but wait. Still, I couldn't forget the effect of that pitiful bleat on all of us even before we had seen the yogi.

"Bring it back, Joe!" yelled the admiring Lefty. "We'll give you baksheesh."

There was a chorus of affirmations to that suggestion. Baksheesh! That would get old yogi into action! And it did.

"The little goat, she is gone, sahib!" The yogi looked perplexed, as if he had met a greater wizard. He had; but I didn't know it at the time.

"Sure. Bring it back, jildi! We gotta be goin'. Much baksheesh. Jildi!" said Cue-Ball.

"Give me my goat! You have got my goat!"

The fellows looked at each other blankly. Was this another phase of the trick?

"Give me the goat! You have disappeared the goat! I will get him the police!"

"Now, listen, Joe, quit stalling. You know — well where that goat is," said Lefty, losing his patience and his admiration at the same time.

"The goat! Give to me the goat!"

"I'll give you a poke in the teeth!" said Lefty.

"Come on, fellows. Let's get out of here," I said, sensing trouble. "This old swindler is pulling a fast one to turn the crowd on us."

There were several attempts to block our path as we made for the siding.

"What do you think of that for gall?" said Specs as we moved along. "These — wogs'll throw the hooks into you every chance they get."

"Beats me how the Limeys put up with 'em," said Punchy Panchetti.

The boys at the train spotted us two blocks off and started yelling and waving. And no wonder! The train was beginning to move. We ran like sixty, and suddenly we were aware that we were not alone. A big gang of natives ran behind us in full war cry. But we made it. We swung aboard just as the engine got into its stride. The natives ran along for a block or two, shouting and yelling like dervishes, but the fellows gave them the Bronx cheer with all the trimmings and some extra.

"There's one stinking dump the Japs can drop a bomb on so far as I'm concerned," said Specs with particular vehemence.

"Yeah, *man!*"

We flopped on our seats to regain our puff.

"Boy," said Peeler, "if we had to fight the Japs right now, I'd be too much out of wind to defend myself. Sure is a tough war."

"*Mreh-eh-eh-eh!*" said Lefty.

I jumped as if I had been shot. So did all the other chaps.

"Did you make that noise?" I asked, looking at Lefty.

"Not me, sir!"

"Then who—?"

*Mreh-eh-eh-eh! Mreh-eh-eh-eh-eh! Mreh! Mreh! Mreh!*

There was no doubt who made that noise.

"—! He's got us hypnotized by remote control!" said Lefty in great alarm. "We better—"

"Hypnotized, nothing!" I said. I reached over and yanked the lavatory door open, and there, nibbling on the last of the toilet paper was the cutest little black goat you'd ever want to see.

"How in—" began Cue-Ball.

"Greenwald," I said. "Where's Greenwald?"

"You don't mean he changed Greenwald into this goat? Oh, —!" Lefty was plainly worried until he saw the benefits of such a transformation; then he brightened up, greatly.

"Where's Greenwald?" I repeated. My landing lights had finally flashed on, and I could see it all—some of it.

"He must be back there, sir," said Punchy. "Come to think of it, he wasn't with us when we took off for the train."

"Look in the other compartment," I suggested. "He's on the train somewhere, all right. He started back before we did, and we didn't miss him."

"That's what I always say," said Lefty. "We wouldn't miss him."

Greenwald was in the other compartment, all right. When he appeared, I couldn't decide which looked the more innocent: he or Billy the Kid.

"This little goat," I said. "How did it get here?"

"Oh, you know how it is, sir," grinned Greenwald. "All the guys was watchin' the yogi, and gappin' like morons. Me, I watches that basket, and by gosh, I sees Billy the Kid eatin' his way out through the side of it. When the yogi was kiddin' with the crowd, I snags Billy sort of unconscious-like, I guess, 'cause when I'm halfway back to the train, I find he's under my arm sayin' *Mrub! Mrub! Mrub!* I see it's too late to take him back 'cause the engine is whistlin'. So I packs him aboard and drops him in the john."

"Well," I said, "at the next stop we'll have to dispose of him to some native." I no more than got the words out of my mouth when Billy gave us that "*Mreh-eh-eh-eh!*" stuff again. I didn't have the heart to say any more then; so I let the matter drop.

In a couple of minutes the boys were all kidding about it. They christened Greenwald "Yogi Greenwald, the Walla

Walla Wizard," and they howled with glee as they recalled the look on the yogi's face when he found that little Billy didn't live there any more.

"And to think," said Lefty, "that son of a gun thought he could kid the Yanks!"

"He was doin' a — good job of work at it, too," said Greenwald, "until I took a hand."

"—, no! He didn't fool this child for a minute. I had that yogi spotted for a phony right from the start," defended Lefty.

It was Greenwald's coup, but how eager everyone was to share in the credit! The truth was that we had been made to look almost as foolish as we were.

"And did you see his face when he says, 'You have disappeared the goat?'" cracked Peeler. "Ho, ho, ho! I could 'a' died."

"Geev me mine coat, or I'm getting it the police," chortled Specs.

I couldn't make out for a moment whether the goat had disappeared in India or on Maxwell Street, Chicago. The stuff they imputed to that yogi which he never said nor did would fill a book. And he must have had every accent from Yiddish to Scotch. Anyway, we had plenty of good laughs over it.

Our revelry was interrupted by, *Mreh-eh-eh-eh-eh! Mreh-eh! Mreh-eh-eh!*

Never in all our lives had we heard anything as terribly appealing as that tender little bleat.

"Give him something to eat, quick," said Lefty. "Where's some more toilet paper. Action, men!"

"There ain't no more toilet paper," Punchy was definite on the subject.

"Oh, oh! Then we're on the spot."

"Yeah. I said right away it was a mistake to keep that runt!"

The boys fished around and found a part of a loaf of bread. They threw it into the john to Billy, who said *Mrub! Mrub! Mrub!*

Every time Billy finished eating what they threw him, he started that soul-wrenching bleat. By six o'clock he had eaten everything we had except the stuff in cans; and he licked the labels off those so that we didn't know what was in them any more. He got most of Cue-Ball's shirt, which he had left hanging in the john; Specs's shorts, which were hanging in there to dry; and some air-mail note paper which Peeler had decided could be used for other purposes than that originally intended. That was the last straw which cooked little Billy's goose.

The train was roaring along about twelve miles an hour when Peeler emerged with little Billy in his arms. It was a touching sight. We watched with amazement as he opened the carriage door and set little Billy on the ledge. He drew back his foot:

"You old——!" he ground. "Oosh!!"

And Billy the Kid disappeared. Again. Out into the night.

## SCREWIER SCREW BALLS

IT WAS raining again, and it was fast growing dark with the inky darkness of the mid-monsoon months. We looked out dismally at the driving rain and began to roll our sleeves down in preparation for swarms of mosquitoes. I was visiting the barracks on a regular call, and I listened without comment to the consideration of the latest latrinograms concerning the sending of men home from this theater, on which the boys had reached a very positive conclusion, the same conclusion they always reached: It was all a crock! For once I was inclined to agree with them.

Peeler and Greenwald had gotten into a discussion about staying in India which amused me.

"Would you stay, then, if they was to give you fifty thousand bucks a year?" Greenwald was probing the depths of Peeler's monetary resistance.

"Nope. Not even for fifty thousand bucks a year."

"What if they raised it to a hunnert thousand a year?"

"If they was to double it, I'd still say, 'Scram!'"

Greenwald was silent for a moment, pondering this lofty scorn of baksheesh; then he observed softly, "Wisht they offer me a hunnert grand."

Peeler flicked a cigarette butt out into the rain and casually lit another. "You're like a lot of other people, Greeny; can't see further than that mole on the end of your beak. All right. Say they pay you all that sugar to stay over here. Will that buy you a couple million miles of paved highways which you can use free whenever you want to? Will that buy you a decent movie house where you can see a decent show when



you like? —, no! And will all that dough get you a choc'late malted when you feel like it? or a can of cold beer when it's hot like it is in this — hole?" Peeler was really working up. "Or will it get you all the parks which we got free in the U.S.?" he continued. "Or all the places which you can go into bakshee, like the Field Museum which I seen at the World's Fair? And will it give you clean streets and clean people? And will it give you the best — country on earth? —, no! Well, all them things is part of your pay in the old U.S., Greeny, but you never figure on it. So my pay at home is thirty-five bucks a week. Thirty-five bucks plus ten billion bucks' worth of stuff which is mine to use, and which I don't have to pay for. And you want to stay in this — hole for a hunnert grand? —! You can have it if you ain't no smarter'n 'at."

Take this chap Peeler, now: a scamp if there ever was one, and yet he had some of the soundest ideas I've ever heard expounded by a G.I. I'll have to confess that I had never considered all the things of a material nature by the past generation as being part of my salary, and yet Peeler was right: You'd have to pay for them in any other country.

"But they sent most of the old 22nd boys home."

Peeler sighed fervently. "— good thing, too. If those boys had stayed here, we'd lost this war, sure." He spat vehemently at a leak in the porch. "I never was in a more screwy outfit."

"But they wasn't so screwy they didn't catch up with you, Chick." Greenwald grinned slyly.

"Catch up with me, —! I *asked* for a transfer on account I was sick of that bunch. I don't care who knows it."

"Never did see a bunch like 'em for throwing parties, though," said Steve, who had just come out and joined the group. "Every time I dropped by their day room they was throwing a party in full swing. When I ask them what's the

occasion, they always said, 'We knocked out the Mytinge Bridge today.' Listen to that crowd, they knocked out that bridge fifty times; but they never did knock it out; us 490 boys done it."

"Like — you did!" stormed Peeler. "The 22nd knocked it out, and you buzzards came in right behind and took the pictures and claimed the glory. You can't tell me. —, no!"

While the boys wrangled, I tilted my chair back and began to live over again my days with the 22nd. I had been their first Chaplain, and I knew most of the inside dope. And what a collection they were! Many of them had walked out of China from the first raid over Tokyo; some of them had come out of the Philippines and Java; the rest had come in on the *Mariposa*.

Those 22nd boys had something, though. It wasn't discipline; they didn't know the meaning of the word—the few that did, thought it was something they gave you in the infantry. It wasn't morale, for they were always squabbling. The nearest I can come to it is family feeling. They drank one another's gin, wore one another's clothes, wrote to one another's girls, and spent one another's money. But, whatever it was, they were on the ball when it came to a flying mission. I used to go out with the C.O. to watch them take off. The Group C.O. was formerly a 490th man, and he would stand there and fume at the way the 22nd took off. It seemed that they just went down the runway like a flock of chickens. But: They would be back over the field in beautiful formation almost before the last plane had taken off. And there was no other squadron that could do it anywhere near half that good. I can see them all again in my memory: There were Wildner, Blanton, MacElroy, Porter, Greenstein, Thomas, Thompson, Lynn, Karlin, and Barnes; Lyle, Feliciano, and Prescott. Some of them, like McCook,

Karlin, Greenstein, Simonetti, and Lemmich, will never come again.

I wonder where Puckett is now: He was their C.O. for a while. F'om the Deep South, suh. The last time I saw him, I was trying to soothe him over his loss. He hadn't shown up at the orderly room that morning; so I went down to his quarters to find out what the deal was. Puck was in bed—sick, he said. But what really had happened was that the night before he had won four hundred rupees shooting craps, and then lost it along with another twelve hundred in a ten-minute game of red dog.

"Chap'ain," said Puck, as I came into his room, "Ah sweah Ah don' know whut happen. Ah sweah Ah don'. But Chap'ain, no mo' gamblin' fo' me! No, suh! Ah'm th'ough f'om now on. Yas suh!"

And he was. He never gambled for a cent after that.

Nobby was typical of the 22nd boys. Nobby was a Tokyo man, and for sheer screwiness he couldn't be beat. No, sir! He was extremely popular with everybody on the post, and he was a square shooter and a real officer when on the job. But when he went on leave!

In early spring, 1943, Nobby got a few days off in Calcutta, where he promptly collected a reputation by challenging a huge Sikh policeman to a wrestling match on Chowringhee Road, right outside the Grand Hotel. Almost a half of Calcutta must have crowded around the spot, and the traffic was stopped completely. It was quite a tussle.

This Sikh was a husky lad, and after about five minutes of mopping up the floors, he managed to flop Nobby on his back, to the delighted roars of the natives. Then our boys rallied round Nobby and gave him a cheer, and started the betting going. The next round was plenty tough. The Sikh's beard kept tickling Nobby's face, but finally Nobby con-

ceived the great idea of grabbing hold of it and using it for leverage. It was too much for the Sikh; so Nobby threw him in about eight minutes. Both contestants rose to their feet, looked at each other, and grinned and said, "Teek hai!" and repaired to the bar. Somehow they forgot the third fall. But I heard Nobby insist that he had won four clean falls. Anyway, when I last saw him that night he was still "falling." Nobby's exploits won for us the admiration of all Calcutta and drew the inevitable exclamation: "Those crazy Yanks!"

"They was all screw balls!"

The G.I. talk brought me out of my reverie.

"Take Poser, now," Greenwald was saying. "He could 'a' made staff if he hadn't got messed up over that Limey's wife."

"What was that?" asked Steve, who was always willing to listen where women were concerned, and who consequently always suffered from "sari nerves."

"It was like this," said Greenwald. "Me and Poser hops a freight train and goes to the dance at the European Club in town. We has a good time, too. The next thing I know, Poser got him a gal to dance with, and he winks at me as they go by. A native gal, she was, but a swell looker and dressed in a skirt like our gals. After a while, she introduces old Poser to her husband, a Limey who is in the oil business and is sixty years old at least, and nearly too weak to walk. You know how those old Limeys get after so long in India. This gal is about twenty-five, I guess."

"After that, Poser is in town often. Then one day the C.O. gets a letter from this old Limey sayin' his wife is gone off with Corporal Poser. He wants his wife back and Poser thrown in the brig."

"So they gave him the works, huh?" said Steve thoughtfully. "Wonder where she—"

"It's no use, Steve. I tried that angle, too," smiled Greenwald. "I guess Poser knows where she is, but he ain't goin' to tell. But it seems nothing was done about it."

I knew the whole story about Poser, but of course I kept my mouth shut. When the C.O. got that letter, he called me in and asked me what he should do about it. Finally, he asked me to look into the matter and report to him, which I did.

Greenwald had told the truth when he said the girl was comely and the old Englishman was too weak to crawl. When I interviewed him, he didn't seem to be greatly concerned except for the fact that there was no one to do the housekeeping for him now. He said that Poser was a frequent visitor to his home and he had extended him every hospitality. He wanted his wife back "to clean up the place." And it surely needed cleaning up. Poser denied all knowledge of the whereabouts of the girl when I interviewed him about it. Sure, he was lying. So I went back to the Old Man.

"What shall we do, Chaplain—sweat it out of him?" he asked.

Before I answered I considered what Greenwald had said: "Is that gal goin' to be satisfied with a Limey corpse after knowin' one of our boys? Like — she is! So what does she do? She gets her another one. Maybe Peeler." I think Greenwald was right; so I said to the Old Man, "It's a tempest in a teapot, sir. It might be best to forget it."

That is just what we did. I was probably wrong in not trying to put a stop to the business. But suppose I had. Promiscuity would have followed on her part, and we should soon have had some new venereal diseases to contend with.

The boys ended the discussion of the case with a discourse on the ethics of an old man of sixty marrying a girl in her

teens. By the time they were through they had traced the old Limey's pedigree to the last ape. They concluded with the usual consensus: "There ought to be a law."

"But it was that nurses deal that made me laugh," chuckled Steve. And we all laughed.

When we got to this post in Bihar, we had a dispensary but no hospital. Then they built us a hospital, but we had no nurses. So the hospital C.O., Major Ward, radioed for nurses and got a reply that ten nurses were on the way. As soon as the 22nd boys heard that bit of news, they organized a party to greet the nurses. They hadn't seen a white girl in months, and an American girl in years, it seemed; so this party was going to be an all-out celebration. They collected three thousand rupees for liquor. I reminded the boys about it, and Greenwald said,

"Yeah! They sent Peeler to town in a two-and-a-half-ton truck to get the booze and the — fools gave him the dough in cash."

"Why, you lousy—" began Peeler at the insinuation.

"Now keep your shirt on. I ain't meanin' a thing," soothed Greenwald.

"What were the sordid details?" asked Steve, impatiently. "Peeler tasted up all the booze, is that it?"

"Like — I did!" said Peeler. "I never got much of it."

"No. Chick bought the liquor all right. Mostly gin, he says. On the way home the truck hit a stone bridge and catches fire, and everything is burned up: truck, booze, and the 22nd boys. And that's why Chick ain't in the 22nd no more."

"Tush!" snorted Peeler.

"So they had no party and no liquor." Steve was trying to force the story.

"They had a party and *plenty* of liquor. They sent another detail in another truck after a new lot. Which was funny,

seein' as how Peeler claims he bought up all they was in that joint," concluded Greenwald.

"Peeler bought empty bottles and crashed the truck on purpose," said Steve with a nudge at Greenwald, and trying to bait Peeler.

"Tush!" said Peeler again, loftily.

But right then I knew that Steve had hit the nail on the head. Why wasn't Peeler hurt in that crash? There wasn't a scratch on him. Next time I get to that town, I said to myself, I'm going to do a bit of sleuthing. Gosh! That Chick Peeler is surely slick!

Well, we sweated those nurses out for a month after we got news they were on the way; then the boys got the party lined up and called the hospital the day they got in.

"I'll have them there by eight o'clock," answered Major Ward.

And there they were. All waiting for the nurses to show up and kidding one another about who was going to stake out the prettiest and all that kind of talk. About nine o'clock the girls came, and as they trooped into the club, strike me dead if I'm not telling the truth, they were the homeliest, fattest, thinnest, most beat-up bunch of women that ever left the States. They must have combed all forty-eight states to collect that lot; no one state could possibly have that many homely nurses. The best-looking one was straight up and down like a boy. The only place she stuck out was at her schnozzle, and she had plenty of that. Dunham took one look and turned to the bar with, "—! And I thought I left Granny at home safe in her wheel chair!"

One of the girls was quite fat and had a map like a horse, and the wolves, instead of shouting "Woo-woo!" shouted "Whoa-whoa!"

For a few awful minutes you could have heard a hairpin drop in that clubroom. Finally, cocky little Birch Williams popped up with, "Drink hearty, men, and you'll see less!"

And the boys went to it. I popped my head in about once every hour, and each time there was something new going on. The hit of the evening was Birch Williams' Song of the Three Ba—er—ahem—Illegitimate Men. One time Puckett was leading the whole crowd in, "An when Ah dah, don' bury me at all, jes' pickle mah bones in alcohol." And above it all would ring Birch's voice: "Drink hearty, men; they get better-looking with every quart."

It was the best party the 22nd ever threw. Even the girls had a rollicking time. They turned out to be pretty swell old girls, too, and they surely knew their job. The pay-off came, though, when late that night Birch Williams volunteered to see the fat one home to the Hospital. They walked a couple of hundred yards, and suddenly fell into a slit trench. Birch got out all right, but he couldn't get the plump lass out; so he went off to get help and forgot all about her. Old Babu, the bearer, found her there early the next morning, yelling her head off. And was she sore! Old Babu shook his head sadly; it was just beyond him.

Those nurses surely kept the place alive after that. Every officer on the post was trying to take a long-term lease on one or another of them. As I said, the best-looking one looked more like a boy than a girl; but that didn't stop Major Puckett and Colonel Polfitt from running competition on her. The stratagems these two lads resorted to in order to outsmart each other would fill a manual on military tactics. The most consistent winner was Birch Williams, who would sneak around to the back porch while the rank was sweating it out on the front porch.

The big laugh in Polfitt's campaign came one day when he



vowed he was going to take Eager Baker up in a B-25 and scare the daylights out of her. A collective grin spread over the whole post, because Polfitt was the boy who could do it. He was the best darned stunt flyer in the theater, having been chief test pilot for North American at one time.

Up went Polfitt and Bake. He put the plane through every maneuver in the book. Eager was in the copilot's seat, and each turn, dive, and bank just seemed to thrill her more. Finally, and in face-saving desperation, Polfitt dived and swooped to within a few yards of the ground, and as he did so, Eager grabbed the copilot controls and pushed forward. How he got that plane back up, no one knows, not even he; but when they climbed out of that plane it was Polfitt who had had the daylights scared out of him. Eager had had a glorious time.

When the 22nd outfit went into Jamshedpur, there used to be a near riot. There was an American community in Jamshedpur which was captained by the Price brothers, Glen and Jim. What a sigh of relief the police departments of all the major American cities must have heaved when these two hellions left to come to India to organize the production at the Tata Steel Mills! Together with our boys, officers and men, Glen and Jim Price could raise more — than an army. And they were brother, father, and guardian to every G.I. that hit town on a pass. Glen kept perpetual open house and sent a notice to the post telling the boys where they could find the key and the booze in case he should not be at home at any time. The Price boys were a reservoir of jokes and stories of all kinds, and they could entertain for hours with their repertoire, which never seemed to run dry. I met Glen one day just after his return from Calcutta, where he had gone for a medical examination. He was much sobered, and

explained to me that he had made a fool of himself and was not going to cut up any more.

"What happened, Glen?" I asked in genuine concern, because he was one swell Joe.

"Well, Chaplain, you know my old heart is not so good. Well, I made an appointment for an examination at the Oriental Hospital out by the University. I took a room there for a few days; and when I came back to the Grand Hotel to get my clothes I met Zed Barnes and the boys, who were down for a few days rest."

"Oh! Oh!" I said in alarm. Zed is a chaplain's headache any time.

"Yes, indeed to goodness, now. After we had a couple of drinks the boys took me to the hospital. Very kind of them now, wasn't it? But when we reached there it was one o'clock, mind you. So I knocked at the front door for ten minutes before I could get anyone up.

"What do you want?' they said.

"Let me in,' I said.

"You can't come in here,' they said.

"I can come in, and I'm going to come in. I've got a room reserved,' I said.

"Go away,' they said, 'you have no room here.'

"I have just ordered a room this morning, mind you,' I said, 'so I'm coming in and take my place.'

"You can't have a room here,' they said.

"And why not?' I said.

"This is the Maternity Hospital,' they said. And mind you, they was right. There, now."

Glen may have reformed; but I have my doubts.

When my thoughts once more turned back to the boys on the porch, they were deep in a discussion of Duncan's case.

I remembered Duncan well. The rascal had come to me when we were yet in Karachi and asked me to start a Sunday school. I thought that was very fine of him until I learned that he was up for court-martial and wanted some points. But here was a boy who really got around India at the army's expense and without the army knowing a thing about it.

Duncan wore glasses, a facial embellishment that made him look as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth nor cheese choke him. But he was all there, believe me. Well, one day he broke his glasses and had to be sent to Calcutta to get new ones. That was the last anybody saw of him for three months. Everybody just seemed to forget about him. And when anybody did remember him it was to wonder what had become of him. Inquiries were made, and orders sent out to pick him up. They found him living in Calcutta in a private home.

The guess was that he was in for it; but Duncan just smiled innocently and waited for his court-martial. Speculation was rife as to how many years he would get for desertion. He came to me for an interview just before his trial, and he hinted that he would like me to defend him. I pointed out that I couldn't do that; but I did give him some advice, stressing the fact that he should tell the truth, or at least certain parts of it.

The post was electrified when the news of his trial and sentence came out. For gallivanting around in India for three months without leave he got only a fine of one month's pay. Few people knew the inside story. Here it is: We had sent Duncan to Calcutta but had omitted giving him orders or making any arrangements for him to be billeted down there. We had assumed that he would stay at the hospital. The hospital people had no room for him, though, so he went downtown and stayed at the Grand Hotel for a day or so

until he met this Irish girl. He was supposed to wait until his glasses were ready. The investigation showed that his glasses had taken nearly eleven weeks to prepare; so, technically, he was only about one week overdue, and it was our fault for not taking care of him. What he didn't reveal was that this Irish girl and her father took him in and took him traveling with them all over India: Bombay, Bangalore, Darjeeling, and points east and west. He got back to Calcutta just when the order came in for the M.P.'s to pick him up.

Some people thought Lynch was a screw ball. Maybe so; but he had his wits about him, or we should have lost Breathing. Breathing was accidentally shot while cleaning a Tommy gun in a "God-forsaken" wilderness called Noakali. There was nothing there; no hospital, no dispensary, nothing. He was hurt seriously and would have died within two hours had it not been for Lynch. That boy didn't wait to ask questions or to draw up plans. He knew what had to be done, and he did it with dispatch. He rushed Breathing to the railway station, commandeered a locomotive which was attached to a train and ready to pull out, signaled for a clear line, and beat it up to Dacca to the British Hospital. The amazed Indians were yelling their heads off, but no one wanted to argue with a forty-five; so Lynch and Breathing made it, with only minutes to spare. As it was, Breathing was in the hospital over three months before they could move him to send him back to the States. Breathing was a likable Southern boy, and the British doctors made a great friend of him; they loved his accent.

Speaking of doctors, the 22nd had the prize of them all. Vince Deane was an experimentalist if there ever was one, and a consistent loser at poker. They say that he paid off the mortgage on Zed Barnes's dear old mother's farm. As you might guess, we called him Gunga Deane. That is, we

called him Gunga Deane until that dhobi itch episode; then we changed it. But I'll tell you of that little incident in my own way:

It was my day to visit the hospital in town, and a bunch of the boys had asked to go in with me to see a friend of theirs who was in the skin ward.

"Hi, Cue-Ball, howsa boy?" I hailed as we neared the bed.

"Lousy! Just plain lousy!"

Cuban was in with a bad skin eruption. Prickly heat, we hoped. Everybody had prickly heat, it seemed, and then the darned stuff developed a secondary infection from scratching. Some of the boys were raw with it.

"I could scratch myself to bits," added Cue-Ball, clawing his fingers and gritting his teeth.

"Gunga Deane been in to see you yet?" asked Hot Shot casually, handing Cue-Ball his cigarette ration, which was the real reason the boys came in to see him in the first place. Gunga, otherwise Captain Deane of the Medical Corps, was the squadron surgeon and a heck of a good Joe. Not much to say, but always full of laughter and poker chips. A good combination, incidentally.

"Yeah, he been in," said Cue-Ball.

"What you got?" asked Davis hopefully. "Not leprosy, I hope."

"They don't know what I got." Cue-Ball was the picture of disgust. "Old Gunga just says: 'Hum, hum. And how do we feel today, Cue-Ball, old boy?' 'You look O.K. to me,' I says, 'but I feel lousy to you.' But have they done anything? Not a thing. And why? 'Cause they don't know what it is. That's why. He's just stallin'. —! I could scratch myself to ribbons."

And that was no reflection on Doc Deane. There were so many diseases in India which had been picked up by our boys

that no white man had ever seen or heard of before. No wonder our docs were baffled.

There was a red itch with tiny little pustules which the boys euphemistically called "summer syph." Almost all of us got it at one time or another, and we used up bushels of talcum powder, foot powder, baking powder, and boric acid on it. Some of the boys even made a concoction out of tobacco juice, which seemed to get better results than the stuff the dispensary dished out.

There were literally dozens of kinds of athlete's foot. We must have looked like a peculiar new breed of *Homo sapiens* to the Hindus with our feet dyed purple from constant foot-bathing in gentian violet. Our toenails even started to disappear from it. One form of fungus infection was so bad that the G.I.'s called it "athlete's leg"—it went nearly up to our knees!

Dozens of chaps had swollen eyes. No reason, apparently. They just swelled up into a puffy mass, and then puffed down again about a week later. It was hard to convince the doc at first that it was a disease, because he believed the boys got it from crying to go home. Then there was that ear disease which was so painful. Came from the water, they said. Doc never said no. In fact he never said anything beyond "Hum, hum."

Then a nasty kind of kidney colic began to hit our boys and double them up with pain for days at a time. And when you got that in combination with one of the more fancy intestinal ailments like the Delhi belly or the Karachi crud, Brother, you got something!

And the fevers! Gosh, there were dozens of new types that had our boys stumped. One resembled sand-fly fever, but wasn't. Another resembled dengue fever, but wasn't. Still another resembled malaria, but definitely wasn't. And a

fourth we called Arakan fever because we liked the name; but that wasn't either. The Limeys told us about Arakan fever, and it's no picnic.

Lots of our boys complained of receding gums and kept the doc busy painting their gums with nitrate of silver. We looked forward cheerfully to the day when our teeth would start to fall out in our soup. That was an occasion for endless jokes and small talk about what the girl friends would do when we returned home and came at 'em "gumming." I never did see a really bad case of it; but G.I.'s like to exaggerate their ailments, anyway. As to the cause of this receding-gum disease, opinion was divided. The doc said it was due to lack of stimulation of the gums. The G.I.'s held it was the chow, which lacked all the major and most of the minor vitamins. Davis at one time had threatened to study medicine at Northwestern. Or was it Notre Dame? Anyway he knew what he was talking about, and he said it was due to an acute lack of the beer ration. "'Cause why?" he said, concluding his discourse on the subject. "'Cause beer got all the vitamins from A to B includin'."

"You got something there, Dave," said Cue-Ball. "Wonder why they don't send a shipload of beer with every convoy? It ain't that they ain't got it, 'cause Milwaukee could brew enough beer to float the *Queen Mary* every day."

"Sure could do it all right," agreed Hot Shot. "They got ships protectin' the convoys anyhow, and one more ship ain't goin' to hurt 'em. And if it gets torpedoed? So what? Alcohol is lighter'n water and don't sink. They could probably tow the ship right into port, floatin' on the beer."

There was an immediate howl of derision led by Jonesy. "That's a crock if there ever was one," he scoffed. "And, anyway, they ain't got no ships only for beer. Got to use all their tankers for gasoline. And how about the rest of the

essential war goods? How about whisky, and bombs, and cigarettes? How about Kleenex and bacon and beans and bullets? All that stuff gotta come over, too. —, yes!”

“If I only could get one of those Chinese back scratchers, I’d be happy,” said Cue-Ball. “Sure does itch.”

“Any of you guys been a gunner on a cargo ship?” asked Davis suddenly.

“No. So what?”

“So I have. Made six voyages before they took me off and put me in this Air-Borne. And I know there’s plenty room on every ship for a couple hundred cases of beer. They don’t need no special beer ship. I know. I been on ’em.”

There followed the silence of ignorance.

“An’ if they did we’d have our reg’lar ration, and we couldn’t have all these wog diseases we gettin’ now.”

There was a general affirmative shaking of heads and tapping of cigarettes—Cue-Ball’s—accompanied by fumbings in breast pockets for lighters or matches. Men are much like pigeons in a way: They all seem to move in the same direction at the same time.

“’Cause why?” demanded Davis, his ego expanding in his undisputed mastery of the situation. “’Cause beer’s made from yeast, and yeast got all the vitamins.”

“You right on that,” agreed Hot Shot. “My boss eats yeast every day, and he never had nothin’ wrong with him. Still, I like mine in the beer.”

Clouds of smoke were beginning to fill the ward as the boys billowed out on Cue-Ball’s cigarettes.

“You say they got plenty of room. Where they got it?” asked Cue-Ball. “I been on a ship. I never seen no room. —, they had us packed in like niggers at a fish fry.”

“Ever been in the captain’s quarters?”

“No, but—”



"So there you go. The captain, he got three rooms all to himself. Nothing in 'em. They could take one, or even two, of these rooms and put beer in 'em. Stack it right up to the ceiling. Get hundreds of cases in that way."

There was a general outburst of guffaws. "It's O.K. by me," laughed Hot Shot, "but who's goin' to keep the captain out of the beer?"

"Put a lock on the door and seal it."

"You mean lock the captain out of his quarters! Talk sense!"

"Well, maybe the captain's quarters ain't so good," admitted Davis. "But there's plenty other places. Take the room where they keep the anchors. You know that place. It's up in front of the ship, the bows."

"Sure. But how much room you got there? Jimminy Christmas! I sure'd like to scratch," added Cue-Ball. "Wisht I had some cold beer right now."

"You could have it, too, if they'd only do like I say," went on Davis.

"Yeah. But suppose they get a storm and the anchors swing around in there. Then what happens? All the cans get busted, and where are you?"

"But they don't keep the anchors in there at all. They hang outside the ship. They only put 'em in there when—when—" Davis couldn't remember under what conditions they put the anchors inside, so he let it go. "No. They never keep the anchors in there."

"Then what do they keep in there?"

"Paint. They keep all their paint up in there. 'The Paint Hole' they call it."

"Well, how they goin' to put beer in it if it's full of paint?" Cue-Ball was becoming impatient with all this beer talk anyway.

"They could put the paint below." Davis stuck to his theory.

"Now if that ain't a crock!" snorted Cue-Ball.

"What kind of ships you think we runnin'?" asked Jonesy. "Beer in where they keep the anchors! Paint down below! The captain locked outa his own quarters! Good thing they took you off those ships."

Davis was a good bit out of face. "I know they got plenty o' room," he persisted. "On the hatches they could stack—"

"That finishes it! The hatches, he says," scoffed Jonesy. "The hatches! What you figure on doin' with the crew? And maybe a couple hundred G.I.'s? Put 'em in irons, or leave 'em ashore until the boat docks?"

Davis was saved from answering that bit of logic by the arrival of Gunga Deane, the squadron doc. We jumped to feet and stood respectfully by.

Gunga looked wise, and did a lot of unnecessary stuff, like putting his hand on Cue-Ball's brow, and said, "Hum! Hum!" He sure looked intelligent—like El Brendel.

"What have I got, sir?" asked Cue-Ball with some apprehension. "Could be they'll send me home?" he added hopefully.

"Don't know exactly, Cuban, but I think it's a form of what we call dhobi itch. It's breaking out all over the camp since we changed our dhobi wallah."

"You mean this new wog that washes our clothes is lousy, sir?"

"Not exactly that. Anyway, be sure to keep your skin dry all the time. I'll prescribe some new salve for you."

"If we only had some beer, sir—" broke in Davis.

"Beer! That's right. Our ration is due, isn't it? And that's another thing, Cuban: No beer or alcohol in any form for you until we decide definitely what's wrong with you. It will

only exaggerate your condition. And we don't want that, do we?"

"N-n-n-no, sir."

"Well, I'll speak to the nurse about your diet before I leave. I have some other men to see first. And—oh, yes! Get out in the sun a little every day. S'long."

"I think I got to be goin'," said Davis, lamely.

"And if you don't come back, I'll bust out cryin'," said Cue-Ball venomously. "—! Now I don't even get my beer!"

"We'll take care of it for you," soothed Hot Shot piously.

It was the dhobi itch all right. Half the camp had it and had it bad. It seems that they got it from the ink with which the dhobi marks the clothes. This ink is made from the juice of some native nut and it plays Hamlet on sweaty skin; something like a bad case of poison ivy. The guys that had it were almost raw from it. And we knew it was the dhobi itch because Gunga Deane had put some of the stuff on his arm by way of experiment. He got the dhobi itch all right, and he got it bad. His next job was to find a cure for it. And that proved difficult in view of the tenacity of the condition.

Gunga tried every salve, ointment, unguent, wash, and powder known to medical science in an effort to clear up his own case of dhobi itch. But it got steadily worse. Soon it had spread to his left side, and it became a problem for him to keep his pants on. It was the joke of the post. But by no means the joke it was to become. Old Sakoor, the chief bearer, was all sympathy. "I myself will cure you, Captain Sahib," he said magnanimously.

Doc just grinned and went on suffering. Then one day Sakoor saw him lying in the sun trying to dry the condition up. The old boy was insistent this time. "Sakoor will cure you, sahib. It is the itch from the dhobi. Sakoor will do it."

By this time Gunga was reduced to a sort of mental quies-

cence. He was willing to let anybody do anything. So Sakoor went to work. He appeared at Gunga's quarters with a bucketful of some vile-looking, evil-smelling concoction which he called "poultass." It looked and smelled like cow manure. And the fellows wasted no words in saying so, either.

"No, sahibs. Not the cow manure. Poultass!" said Sakoor. And Doc was somewhat reassured.

In no time at all, Gunga's arm and side began to heal. Sakoor came religiously every day and applied his remedy. It was the joke of the post, and there was talk of putting Sakoor in charge of the dispensary and switching Doc over to take charge of the bearers in Sakoor's place. Gunga took it all in good part, though. There was no doubt that old Sakoor had a remedy for the dhobi itch which worked on Doc, at least. And Doc was all set to get the prescription. This was no time for science to carp at folklore anyway.

"What is this stuff, Sakoor?" asked Gunga one morning as Sakoor was applying his remedy to Doc's arm. "It sure looks and smells like cow manure," he added, half jokingly.

"No, sur-r!" Sakoor was emphatic. "No, sur-r! Not cow manure. I am a Hindu, sur-r!"

"What the — is it, then?"

"Buffalo dung, sur-r!"

We laughed for two solid hours. Every time we stopped, we'd see the look on Gunga's face, and off we'd go again. And old Gunga Deane will never live it down as long as he's in this theater of war. And why not? You've guessed it already. Sure! But if there's an army doctor that I really like, it's old *Dunga* Deane.

## MYSTIC INDIA

GOSH! I was hungry! A peculiar pang had been gnawing at my in'ards for about a month. But the chow was lousy. Greenwald reported that the chow was lousy. The Mess Officer admitted the chow was lousy. And believe it or not, even the Mess Sergeant remarked that the chow was lousy, which is the first example of such an admission in military annals. So the chow was lousy. So what!

"There's a little place in El Paso," I said, "just this side of the bridge—Ma's Place, I believe they call it—where you can get a slab of fried ham, French fries, apple pie, and coffee, all for fifty cents."

"A lot of good that is to all present company, sir," scoffed Greenwald, "except to bust morale wide open. And mine's got a big crack in it right now."

"The folks back home would never believe the chow could be so bad with chicken every day," I mused.

"Chicken! Chicken!" snorted Greenwald. "You mean to call these petrified buzzards we get chicken! Why, you can't get your teeth into the gravy."

And that wasn't mere hyperbole. I never saw chickens so tough—nor so many of them. And no wonder. A chicken's life in India is a continual round of dodging jackals, wild-cats, and frying pans. It did seem, though, that the natives for miles around were collecting all the tough old birds they could find and turning them over to our Quartermaster at

five rupees per. Oh, well, the supply can't last forever. Springers will have to come along some day.

The men ate very little at the mess hall. But no one ever missed a chow session. It seemed like a religious duty to them to go there and cuss the stuff. "I wouldn't pass up a chance to dump a cargo of that wog-fodder in the garbage pail for anything," was the way one G.I. put it. And the trucks hauled it off to the dump, where hundreds of natives fought over it, and hordes of Pi dogs scrambled for the remains, with vultures and hawks cleaning up the bases.

Things went from bad to worse steadily. Finally Steve, the Provost Marshal, issued permits to the wallahs to come on the post and sell their stuff. Sure, on the Q.T. There were the cake wallah, the bread wallah, the orange wallah, the banana wallah, the duck wallah, the chicken wallah (with that elusive product, the tender springer), and a host of other wallahs. And in no time at all they were doing a kiss-salesgirl business.

Theoretically, all products were supposed to be checked for disease; but that was an impossible task. Anyway, low morale and malnutrition were likely to be worse than the few cases of disease we might turn up. None of our boys was afraid of disease, anyway. Hadn't we all received every shot known to medical science since leaving the States? It was well known that when we cut ourselves, shaving, something like watermelon juice oozed out; and if a fly pitched on it, he was a dead duck. So why worry about such trifles as plague, typhus, cholera, or leprosy?

Then Captain Ewarts came down from Delhi to check our morale. Greenwald and I took him around the campfires one night, and we ate so much roast duck that we lost our military bearing.

"I've often wondered how much chicken goes into the

ministry every year, sir," mused Greenwald. "That's one for 'The World Almanac and Book of Facts' if they ever get around to it."

"The best fed army in the world," said Ewarts at the last campfire.

"A duck in every slit trench! That's the slogan of our post," I contributed with a laugh.

"And a chicken in every charpoy!" added Greenwald under his breath, peering into the darker recesses of the barracks.

But I was still hungry.

"Tapeworms, sir!" said Greenwald emphatically. "Better ask the doc to give you something that will give 'em a nudge."

"There's a little place in El Paso," I said, ignoring his suggestion, "where you can—"

"Listen," said Greenwald. "How would you like to eat a meal at an Indian home?"

"No, thanks. I've had some," I said. "No knives, no forks, no spoons. Not even chopsticks. And, finally, no food. Mostly, no food."

"But this place I'm tellin' you about—"

"No! Again, no! And likewise, no! Seeing people eat curried rice with dirty fingers has me stopped. Why, Louis Pasteur would—"

"Yeah, I know: turn over in his grave. But these are educated wogs. Tablecloths. And napkins even, maybe."

"You don't say!"

"Ain't I tellin' you?"

"Let's hear the proposition again. You've been holding out on me."

"Like I say, sir," resumed Greenwald, "these wogs is high class. Christians, even."

"Oh, oh! Then you've got to watch them," I said merrily.

"But they're also college professors, both of 'em."

"In which case they're simple and probably harmless," I replied. "But go on."

We arrived at the Golmals' place in a gharry, the driver of which was a lineal descendant of the chief of Ali Baba's Forty Thieves. The Golmals were swell people, all right—quiet and reserved. And their greeting was just like that—like the Dodgers appearing on their home ground after a prolonged absence. Both of them taught at the university whenever they could break through the riots between the Hindus and Moslems to get there. The family consisted of the parents and three girls of marriageable age, and twelve Hindu students who claimed they were interested in the Professor's subject, biology. Greenwald looked the little lasses over with a keen eye and decided the boys were telling the truth for once. All twelve of them.

It turned out that the whole family was Goanese Christian, and very devout. We talked religion cautiously for about an hour—a prelude, I figured, to the dinner, for which I was heartily ready.

My hunger brought me back to earth, and adroitly I turned the conversation to food via Indian dishes and condiments; whereupon Mrs. Golmal gushed forth: "You really must come and have dinner with us some night. If I had only known you were coming tonight . . ."

Greenwald avoided my look of utter contempt. However, there was nothing to do now but to talk it out.

"Mystic India," I said reflectively, by way of getting my thoughts away from victuals. "They tell me these yogis can go for weeks without so much as a crumb to eat."

"Do you believe in demon-possession?"



"Who—er—what?" I was caught completely off base.

"Do you believe that one's body can be taken over by a demon?" repeated Mrs. Golmal.

Greenwald was sitting with his hands folded and his head down.

"Well, now, Hitler—" I began, groping for time.

"No. I mean, do you think it possible that the evil spirit of a dead person can assume control of the body of a live one?" Mrs. Golmal and the three girls crossed themselves piously. Old Golmal just looked and sat. It was evident that he wasn't going to be able to stop her.

"It all depends," I evaded.

"Then I will tell you a story, you see. A true story. Then you can tell me what you think, you see."

"I was eighteen at the time, you see," began Mrs. Golmal, "and my mother sent me and my infant brother to South India to visit our relatives. Little Rama was only six at the time, you see. Toward the end of our holiday, little Rama contracted a strange illness. He lay on the floor and writhed, you see, and acted as if he were demented. We called the doctor, and he was completely puzzled, you see. The child had no fever, nor any other symptoms of disease, you see."

"Spasms, you see," said that chump Greenwald. "I mean, spasms"—catching himself on the "you see" business just in time.

"The next day," continued Mrs. Golmal, ignoring his diagnosis, "a most peculiar change occurred in the child. He began to speak in a native voice, a mature voice, and the language he spoke was Tamil, a tongue completely unknown to our family, you see, but well understood by my relatives. The boy had never heard Tamil until this visit, you see."

"Not an uncommon phenomenon," I remarked. "Many

similar cases have been reported in literature. I recall the case of a German maid who served a Jewish family. She had seizures during which she talked Yiddish. She had learned it unconsciously from hearing the family speak it over a period of years."

"But this was not that, you see." The Professor had entered the conversation, finally.

"No. His voice," resumed Mrs. Golmal, "it wasn't the voice of a child at all. In fact, there seemed to be more than one voice, you see. And all of them the voices of grown women."

"Tongues!" interjected Greenwald. "Speakin' in tongues. They's lots of it in the Bible." The family hastily crossed itself. "The Holy Rollers," continued Greenwald, "they do lots of it out our way. Right near our—"

"This was the same tongue. Tamil. But let me finish my story. The next day the boy got worse, and we had to send for the doctor again. But he could do nothing, you see. Then one of the servants came forward and said that little Ram was bewitched. 'Send for a hakim, memsahib,' she said. 'He will cure him.' But we are Catholics and don't believe in the hakims, you see."

"What's a hakim, anyway?"

"Oh, you don't know the hakim? He's a native medicine man. He cures by herbs and spells, you see. At least, they claim to," she added at once.

"Well, since we are Catholics, I wanted to send for a priest, you see; but there was none available. So all I could do was to put a crucifix in little Rama's hand. But he hurled it across the room." Mrs. Golmal executed the motion with a heavy arm.

"Like in the pictures I seen one time," contributed Greenwald. "Dracula, he was afraid of crosses. All these vampire things is—"

"Let Mrs. Golmal finish," I said. That fellow Greenwald can talk all night about horror pictures.

"About six that evening," continued Mrs. Golmal, "the boy became so violent that I was frightened and started to cry. Then this maid spoke up again, you see. 'I tell you, mem-sahib, the boy is bewitched. Get a hakim. He will cure the child.' I was so desperate by this time, you see, and the girl was so sure, that I gave in and let her go for a hakim.

"In about a half an hour the hakim came. He went right up to little Rama and talked to him in Tamil. Then he turned to me, you see. 'The boy is bewitched,' he said. 'He is possessed, not of one devil, but three.'

"'Oh, Mother Mary!' was all I could say, you see.

"The hakim told me that one of the women was a Brahmin widow; the second was a Tamil woman who had died recently; and the third was a young bride who had died shortly after her marriage.

"'But how can this terrible thing be,' I asked.

"'I have talked to all three,' said the hakim.

"'This is nonsense!' I blurted out, getting very angry, you see.

"'No nonsense. The truth, memsahib. I will prove it to you,' said the hakim. 'I will go. When I return I shall bring with me a live chicken. If the boy is possessed, as I say, the fowl will die as I cross the threshold.'

"And, if the Virgin seals my mouth, it happened just as he said. The chicken died as he came into the house."

"Fried chick—"

But I cut Greenwald off, hungry as I was.

"A most remarkable affair," I said. "Just what finally happened?"

"I was so confused, and so were my relatives, you see, that I didn't know what to do or say.

"‘Do you want me to take charge, memsahib?’ asked the hakim.

"‘Yes. Do something. Do anything to get little Rama well again,’ I said through my tears. ‘But tell me, how did this terrible thing happen?’

"‘There is a large tree out yonder,’ said the hakim. ‘It is the abode of the three spirits which have taken possession of the child. Unwittingly, the boy relieved himself against it and defiled it. Now they are taking revenge on him. He will not live much longer unless they are driven out.’

"‘Then do something! Drive them out!’ I shouted at the hakim. ‘Do it quickly.’”

By this time both Greenwald and I had forgotten our stomachs. “What he do?” Greenwald blabbered.

"The old hakim bound three strands of wool around the boy, you see: one around his ankle, one around his wrist, and one around his neck. Then he made some signs and said some mysterious words. ‘The boy will be all right now,’ he said turning to me. ‘Watch him closely; and when a change occurs, send for me at once. I shall be waiting.’

"About six o'clock that evening, the boy became violently ill. He writhed and screamed and seemed to be choking, you see. He made several efforts to tear the woollen strands from around his neck. I would have torn it off myself, you see, had not the maid begged me to leave them on.

"‘Let me go for the hakim, memsahib?’ she begged. ‘Do not touch the boy until he comes.’

"I had forgotten the hakim in my terror, you see. But I sent her after him at once. When he came, he was as calm as the desert. He merely smiled, you see, when I implored him to remove the choking strand.

"‘Do not touch him,’ he said. ‘He will be all right in a little while.’

"And I had to stand there and watch those terrible contortions and listen to that horrible choking sound."

"And was he all right after?" I asked a trifle impatiently.

"Yes. He was. In a very little time he was calm and closed his eyes. He slept for about an hour. When he woke up he saw all the people sitting around the bed, and he began to ask questions and to talk in his own language for the first time since his illness. We always used to ask him, 'Who is Ram?' and he used to reply, 'I am the man of the family, of course.' So now we asked him who he was, and he said just as he always said, 'I am the man of the family, of course.'"

"And he had no knowledge of his strange condition?" I prompted.

"None whatsoever, you see. He noticed it was getting dark, and he couldn't understand how he had come to miss his tiffin."

I glanced at my watch suggestively.

"Let me make you some tea," said Mrs. Golmal.

"I couldn't stand it on an empty stomach. Always goes to my head," said that dope, Greenwald, before I could stop him.

"Then you must come to supper, you see. How will Thursday suit?"

"*Teek hai!*" we chorused.

"Then I will tell you another true story, you see," said Mrs. Golmal.

"And perhaps some snake stories," added Mr. Golmal.

But the girls and Mrs. G. made such a clamor against the snake stories that he promised not to speak of them. And that made us doubly curious. In fact, I was ready to stay right there and listen for another hour or so, now. "Absolutely Gospel in the Bible," said Mrs. Golmal, dismissing the snake stories. She said that Golmal had the Indian sign on all

snakes by virtue of a birth mark which, so said an old Brahmin, made him of the same order as snakes. And I didn't know whether she was giving him a dig or telling the truth.

"What you think of it, sir?" asked Greenwald when we were finally settled in Fu King's restaurant at midnight sweating out the ice cream.

"The supper or the story?" I asked maliciously.

"The yarn."

"Childishly simple," I said, with a heavy yawn.

"But she talks as if she believes it."

"Of course she believes it. But the explanation is simple. Can't you see how it was worked? What gets me is that they haven't figured it out yet. I guess they want to believe in mysteries."

Greenwald was quiet for a while, thinking up a solution, I suspected. Finally he leaned over the table. "It's got me stumped. How did it happen? You know, sir? Maybe it was all a crock from the start," he added.

"It's easy. The servant girl and the hakim were in cahoots, that's all," I explained. "It's so simple it amazes me that they were deceived by it. The maid gave the kid a drug that gave him convulsions and made him babble. The hakim was brought in at her suggestion; for it was she who planted the idea of witchcraft, which all Indians fear. All the old hakim had to do was to wait until the drug worked off. The woolen strands were a part of the show. He had to do something visible, naturally. But strange things are said to happen in India," I added reflectively. "Let's see what they have to say on Thursday. And, Brother, they had better have some chow on hand."

The dinner was delicious. That is to say, it would have been a delicious dinner for Greenwald and myself. And per-

haps for our hosts if their appetites were not too much like G.I. But just as we were about to settle down to the grub, in trot the three daughters and the twelve students interested in biology. Or was it anatomy? They crowded joyously around and went to work. I managed to salvage the leg of a pullet which had died in the last stages of malnutrition, though, and Greenwald got a handful of curried rice. If he'd waited for the cutlery to show up, he'd have been out of luck. Greenwald got one of the six chapatties as they went by; but I snagged two slices of the bread. So I considered I was one up on him at the last hole.

When the teacups showed up on the table, I knew there would be no more food coming our way. I was nearly tempted, like *Oliver Twist*, to ask for more, but I remembered what my father used to say: "Them as asks, don't deserve nothin'; them as don't ask, don't want nothin'." So I let it go. Anyway, we retired to the parlor even hungrier than on our previous visit—if that were possible. The Professor kept the talk rolling about the Indian Problem and other things until Mrs. Golmal came in; then she took over. She didn't waste time, either.

"I do not want to terrify the little girls, you see," she began, "so I had better not tell you any stories tonight." She showed the palms of her hands resignedly.

"Oh, mamma!" yelled the girls through the remains of the curried rice—they were still in the dining room. "No ghost or snake stories, please!"

Mrs. Golmal showed the palms of her hands again. "The little ones get so frightened, you see. Do you believe in ghosts?"—turning to old Greenwald.

"Who? Me, ma'am? Absolutely! I seen too many of them not to believe in the darn things. Why, I could tell you—"

"I'm so glad. Then my story will not sound so strange to

you. Some people do not believe me. But it is true—every word of it. Golmal there has heard me tell it many times and exactly in the same way, you see. So he knows it is true. So, Chandra?”

Chandra nodded his confirmation of this proof of veracity. “Very strange,” he mumbled after a pause.

“We were living in Sind at the time.” So Mrs. Golmal was well launched on the story that she was not going to tell for fear of scaring the kids!

“Father had died, and the family had decided to send me to college. I was sixteen then, you see. The college they selected for me was in Bombay. In a large old building that had once been a Mohammedan castle of ill repute. Since this was my first trip away from home, my mother decided to go with me and stay for a few weeks until I was comfortably settled, you see.”

“Please, Mamma! Not that story!” came from the rice and currie brigade. “It always frightens us so we can’t sleep.” *Slurp! Smack! Slurp!*

“Then don’t listen. Go into the back room with the boys.”

“Or with me,” murmured Greenwald. But I gave him the eye.

“Well, as I was saying,” continued Mrs. Golmal, dropping her voice a little, “Mamma went with me. I registered in the morning, and so I had the afternoon free to choose my room and get settled, you see. The room I picked on seemed the best in the whole place to me, and I wondered why no one else had taken it ahead of me. I called on the Sister Superior and indicated to her my choice, you see.

“‘You can’t have that room,’ she said, ‘we never let anybody in it.’

“‘Why not?’ I asked. ‘It is such a nice room.’

“‘There is supposed to be something wrong with it. A



poltergeist or something. Nonsense, of course. But still we don't let anyone use it.'

"'Can't I speak to the Head Mistress,' I asked her.

"'I'm afraid it won't do any good, miss. Those who have tried it in the past have all reported strange things. Some of them had to be sent home. So now we never let anyone have it.'

"Well, there I was. I liked the room so much, you see, that I asked my mother to get it for me. Why should I be afraid? I asked her. Do I not always have my missal and my rosary and my medals?"

The good lady crossed herself and mumbled something. A prayer, perhaps. And the little anatomy lessons, who had now entered the room, followed suit. The Hindus are just like the rest of us: they love excitement even if it does scare them to death.

"And did you get this room?" asked Greenwald, afraid, I presume, that this might turn into a prayer meeting.

"That's just how it was, you see. I got it." She ran her fingers through the hair of one of the girls, who was kneeling at her side, before she continued. "It had an alcove in it for my bed. Mother wanted to stay with me in that room, but I insisted that she take the guest room assigned to her.

"The first night I got no sleep at all because of the noise."

"What noise?"

"The noise of the man—er—person sitting beside my bed. He kept rubbing his hands together all night long as if he were in great glee, you see. I got up several times, you see, to see if I could see anybody, but when I made my light on, everything stopped."

"Wasn't you scared stiff?" Greenwald looked furtively over his shoulder. The light of the room was much too dim to suit him.

"Yes. I was very frightened. But I was determined, you see. 'If there is some evil thing in this room,' I said, 'then the good shall overcome it.'

"The second night was worse than the first. I had such a queer feeling of something deep and evil, you see. And the person who rubbed his hands and laughed was joined by others who kept up a constant traffic in my room. I grasped my rosary until it bit into my hand, and I had my Bible under my pillow, and I had sprinkled my bed with holy water, you see. But every time I got up and put on my light, everything stopped. Mother urged me to give up the room, but I insisted on seeing it through, you see. 'After all,' I said, 'isn't God the guardian of the good? Will He let the forces of evil defeat me?'"

Here the good soul paused to mumble something. An ave perhaps.

"It is a strange story, isn't it? And every word of it true. Well, the next few nights I was seized and shoved and pushed and jostled and shaken in an effort, it seemed, to get me out of that room. But I was stubborn now, you see.

"The climax came on Friday. I had been out with my mother, returning late, you see. I entered my room and noticed a dim light in the alcove. I thought nothing of it, believing it to be the ayah preparing my bed, you see. I got ready for bed and stepped into the alcove. And then I screamed with terror! There on the bed was a corpse, all laid out for burial. I controlled myself and stepped up to the bed, thinking that someone had made a terrible mistake by putting the corpse into the wrong room, you see. Then I nearly collapsed. The corpse on the bed was my own!"

"——!" blurted Greenwald, shuddering and glancing over his shoulder again.

"Yes. Christ the Holy Savior preserve us all!" I added hastily, covering up for him again.

But even I was a little lightheaded in the stomach. The old girl was getting entirely too much kick out of this yarn to suit me. Her black eyes glowed like fire, and she seemed to be looking through us. I had a feeling that we were being hypnotized by her stare; and by dwelling on the idea, I worked myself up to a scare as bad as Greenwald's. The cold shivers began to run down my back, and thoughts of Dracula and Frankenstein's monster shoved past my mental barriers. I was brought back into the room by the outburst of little number three, who was standing behind her mother with her hands pressed to her temples, the picture of fright.

"Oh-h-h, Mamma! Please! Oh, please!" she implored her mother.

The old lady merely smiled in satisfaction at the results she had achieved, and continued her story.

" 'This is the end,' I said, looking down on my own corpse. 'Tonight will be my last on earth.' So I left the alcove, went to the desk, and drew up my will. My father had left me a few things, you see. Then I went to my mother's room and told her what had happened and gave her the will. She tried every way to stop me from going back to my room, but I insisted, you see. 'If my time is at hand,' I told her, 'then no one can prevent it.' "

Again the old girl fell to mumbling, and the little scares joined in.

"This here corpse," said Greenwald, fidgeting uneasily in his chair. "Did you poke it to see if it's really you, like?"

"Would you have touched it, Mr. Greenwald?"

"Who? Me? No, ma'am! I get chicken liver when I see them things."

"When I returned to my room," continued Mrs. Golmal, "the corpse was gone, and in its place there—"

One of the girls rushed forward to stop her mother from saying any more.

"There, there, love! Mamma's almost finished with it. Don't be afraid."

"But I won't sleep again tonight. I'm so frightened now."

Mrs. Golmal ignored the girl's fright. She smiled at us as if about to continue. But I was sorry for the kids. Grown girls they were, of course, but they were as scared as a kid without money in a candy shop. Greenwald got us back to our muttons. He was scared himself, but he just had to hear the end of the story.

"You said the corpse of the body was gone, but there was somethin' else."

"I said the corpse was gone, and in its place there was nothing to show that anything had been there; no wrinkles in the cover or anything. But it seemed as if unseen hands were trying to prevent me from lying on the bed. Don't you have that feeling sometimes, Mr. Greenwald? You know, as if someone is creeping up on you in the dark? As if icy fingers are moving slowly up your spine?"

"Oh, —!" said Greenwald.

I was on to the old girl now. She was enjoying her attempt to scare people out of their wits. A psychic sadist, that's what she was.

"Well, I see you're still alive and kicking," I said jocularly. "So the spooks didn't get you after all."

"No. Yes. That is, no one was more surprised than I was to wake up and find myself alive the next morning. And, do you know, that was the end of the whole thing just about. Oh, there were a few weak manifestations after that; and

soon, nothing at all. The room has been used regularly ever since, you see."

"Let's stop at Fu King's, sir," said Greenwald as we were walking home about midnight.

"So you can load up on ice cream, eh?"

"No. Whisky. Did you see the old hag look me over with them black eyes? Gosh! I'm as creepy as a vine!"

It was some time before I got a chance to go into town with Greenwald again. I thought our experience at the Golmals' had cured him of spending his evenings with Indian families; but you can't cure a man like Greenwald of anything: you just whet his appetite.

Thus it was that he waited on me with the suggestion that we go to town to meet a friend of his—a Church of England preacher this time. I welcomed the opportunity largely because I was new in the country and thought I could learn a few short cuts to the understanding of the people.

When Captain Johnson learned we were going to visit the Reverend Mr. Orthwein, he begged to accompany us. "Johnnie," as we affectionately called him, was the poet and writer of our bunch, and his vivid imagination and facility of expression marked him in our estimation as the man most likely to succeed in drawing superman comics.

The Reverend Mr. Orthwein wasn't what I expected him to be. Behind my old façade, a cup of hot tea, I had a chance to survey him—but nearly forgot to do so because the tea was so good. It was my first taste of Darjeeling tea, and right on the spot I made my first decision to import the stuff after the war and make a fortune for myself. While the Reverend Mr. Orthwein drawled on, I even cooked up a sales slogan

which was so good that I was amazed at my remarkable copy-writing ability. Think of it! Without one bit of training as an advertising copy writer, I evolved this gem which is undoubtedly the best slogan in the tea business: "Gee, Darling, drink Darjeeling!" Can't you see it now, a man in a restaurant with his sweetheart; she is wondering what to order. Then: "Gee, Darling, drink Dar—"

"Ya-a-as! Indayah is a quayah countreh."

The drawling voices brought me back to our hosts. The Reverend Mr. Orthwein was a queer chap. He was Anglo-Burmese. He oozed superciliousness, and his accent, far from being the "chee-chee" accent of the Anglo-Indian, out-Oxforded Oxford, although he never had been farther west than Calcutta. His wife was also of Indian birth, but of English parents, and one had the feeling that Mr. Orthwein was sailing under his wife's colors. He affected to loathe all things Indian and frequently repeated, "Ye-e-es, doncher-know, a bit of a do here after the war for us white people, I'm afraid."

"Do you think they'll molest you?" Johnnie had put it safely.

"Oh, ah-sured-lah, ah-sured-lah! No place for Europeans after this wah."

Mrs. Orthwein was a delightful thing, really, but somehow one gained the impression she was in a trap. She listened as if on edge as her husband droned away for two hours on the mysterious things that go on in "Indiah." Johnnie was all ears. He made pages and pages of notes, figuring on using some of this tripe as the basis for new yarns.

As for me, there was something about the Reverend Mr. Orthwein that made my skin crawl. Inwardly I craved the satisfaction that comes from stepping upon a loathsome centipede. He was relishing his recital of the nonsense about

Indian magic with the air of one who says, "This is foolish, of course, but I intend that you shall believe it." I was glad when his wife excused herself, so that we could make an excuse to leave.

On the way home Johnnie drew up plot after plot around the mysterious and the occult in India. I listened patiently, but there was one yarn about the hand in the night that made me shudder. I was glad when we reached his basha so I could leave him and forget this nonsense.

I was awakened in the morning by the startling news that Captain Johnson was dead! There wasn't a mark on his body, nor any sign of violence, nor any indication that anything shady had occurred. But he was dead, and there was but one thing for Major Knight of the Medical Corps to do, and that was to allege a heart attack. But Johnnie was as healthy as a vitamin pill. His death was a mystery to everyone. Only recently he had passed his physical check-up with flying colors.

Speculation on the cause of Johnnie's death ran high. Greenwald was frightened out of his wits. "What do you make of it, Chaplain? Do you think—our visit last night—with the Reverend—"

"Oh, I don't know. But listen while I do a bit of fictionizing in a speculative way:

"Johnnie slept by himself in the end room of the barracks. He whistled as he undressed, but his mind was still on Mystic India. Here was a mine of material for short hair-raisers. Take this stuff old Orthwein talked about tonight, for example. A bit of dressing up and the stuff would go like hotcakes. Take this hand-in-the-night dish for a start. A little polishing, and it would be fine for a few hundred. He placed his torch under his pillow and prepared to crawl under his mosquito net. Then he remembered his purse. Should he put that under

his pillow, too? He fished around in his trousers' pockets until he found it, placed it under the pillow beside his torch, and crawled in.

"Captain Johnson did not go to sleep at once. Instead, he lay naked on the charpoy, his hands under his head, mulling over his horror stories. 'The Hand in the Night'! What a yarn that would make! He would have the main character win a lot of money. He could be a poker shark to suit the Americans and a banker shark to suit the British. There are plenty of card sharks in all armies. Carstairs, that's always a good gambling name, Carstairs had won a lot of money at the Officers' Club. His friends had warned him to place it in the club safe until tomorrow, reminding him half jokingly of the local legend of the armless hand that removed valuables from pockets and purses during the night.

"Carstairs scoffed at the suggestion, of course, and would proceed to his quarters whistling cheerfully. He would pour himself a stiff Scotch and soda as was his custom, and grin over the thought of burglary by occult means. Then, while undressing, he would become a bit uneasy about his winnings, and he would vary his custom of leaving his purse in his hip pocket overnight with his trousers hanging on the net rack. He would place his purse under his pillow just to be on the safe side. Nonsense, of course, he'd mutter, but no harm could come of taking precautions.

"During the night Carstairs would stir uneasily and finally awaken with a strange feeling that things were somehow not right. He would remember his heavy winnings and start to get up to see if his purse were safe in his pocket. Then he would remember that he had placed it under his pillow, and he would sink back satisfied. He would think that perhaps he ought to feel to be sure it was still there; but he would fight off the idea just to show he was not giving way to superstition. Soon, however, the idea would become com-



pulsive. He would just have to feel under that pillow if he intended to go back to sleep that night. To get the thing over with, he would resolutely thrust his hand under his pillow and end all this nonsense. But: his hand would come in contact, not with his purse, but an armless hand in which the purse would be enclosed. His scream would be stifled by the collapse of his heart, and they would find him dead the next morning with no sign of struggle or upset.

"Captain Johnson smiled happily over the plot. It was all so very neat. Perhaps he ought to get up right now and jot down the main outline; things always seem a bit hazy after a night's sleep. But this yarn was so simple, he reasoned, that he could not fail to remember it. Time enough tomorrow to write it down and polish it up. Start with Carstairs' winnings at the club, and all the rest would just flow out naturally. On the other hand, details may well be forgotten by morning. Oh, well, he could easily fill in new ones. But then, this business of having Carstairs vary his custom concerning his purse . . . Johnnie smiled to himself; he was in his own trap. He himself was caught with a compulsive idea about getting up and taking notes on his plot. He realized that if he was to get sleep at all he must get up and write down this confounded plot. Resignedly he began to loosen his mosquito net. He reached under the pillow for his torch. His hand touched something clammy and cold which was clasped about his purse, moving it slowly from under his pillow. His scream was stifled by the collapse of his heart. Johnnie was dead."

"But that's just a yarn you've cooked up, sir," said Greenwald uneasily.

"Perhaps so. However, we've looked everywhere for Johnnie's purse, and we haven't been able to find it. I know he had it last night because I saw him showing it to the Mr. Orthwein."

## STARVATION

THE rice paddies were lakes; the roads, seas of mud; and we were steaming masses of flesh, bearing our prickly heat heroically as we walked to the mess hall that hot July morning. We had nearly reached our destination when we noticed a native lying in the mud on the road. The ox carts were going unconcernedly around him. No one paid the slightest attention.

"That's one way of getting down to earth," observed Steve, and we plodded through the mud.

"Probably a new form of yoga, called 'mud yoga,'" I replied. "You know these Indians do the darnedest things."

When we came from breakfast the mud yogi was still there, and two other natives were looking at him hopelessly. We went over.

"What's wrong with this man?" demanded Steve of the two natives.

They shook their heads and mumbled, "Mallum nay!" \*

"Bearer!" yelled Steve. "Rutnam! Come over here!" Rutnam, who incarnated the personality of Charlie Chaplin, went to work on the situation at once with a stream of incomprehensible dialect. Then he turned to Steve:

"These men say this man has come from village. He walk three days. He has not food nor money and he is too weak to rise and get job."

"O.K. Get him a loaf of bread and a can of milk from the mess hall, and move him off the road. Jildi!"

\* We don't understand you.

"Very well!" replied Rutnam.

We moved in silence. But that was to be a common sight thereafter—too common. And even now a sensible explanation of the cause of it evades me. The whole thing need not have been if stern and immediate measures had been taken to protect and distribute the food supplies of the Province.

This case of the mud yogi said nothing to us of starvation, however; it merely said that one man was too poor to carry food with him when he went on a long journey looking for work. It took Dacca to make us suspect that all was not well in Bengal.

Tongi was a railway junction near our base. Its rather large river was also the dumping ground for our garbage. From the enlisted mess we had heard weird tales of what went on at the river when the garbage was dumped; so I suggested to the Colonel, a camera fanatic, that we go out and take pictures. We did, but we nearly threw our stomachs away doing it. These pictures are among my prized souvenirs of India.

We rode the "honey wagon," as the garbage truck is called, out to the dump. About a mile before we got there the natives spotted us and began flocking by the dozen to the dump. By the time we reached the place there were hundreds of them on hand with baskets to hold their winnings. The truck backed up to a steep embankment, and six coolies shoveled the filthy mess into the river. Then the fun began. Some of the natives swam out to wait for the tidbits to float out; but about fifty of them got right under the fall of garbage and grabbed and grabbed and grabbed—tin cans, cabbage leaves, rotten turnips, potato peelings until their baskets were filled; then they would come ashore, deposit their load under a tree, and rush back for more.

The river flowed smartly at this point, and soon the refuse

was strewn for several hundred feet, with heads bobbing and ducking all around. One old girl amused us. She was loaded down with ornaments of all kinds and sizes, and her hair was matted like a two-foot rug. But could she get around in the water! Yelling and screaming at the top of her voice, she was scooping garbage like a beaver.

We were so interested in the action in the river that it was some time before I noticed a group of about six boys and girls hanging expectantly around the truck. They made no effort to get into the river and scramble for garbage. I noticed, too, that the two enlisted men who had brought the truck out were somewhat embarrassed by their presence. On a hunch I persuaded the Colonel to get into a small native boat, paddle out into the stream, and photograph the scene from there.

As soon as he was well out from shore, the two G.I.'s ducked behind the truck and fished out something which was eagerly grabbed by the kids. Right away I knew my hunch was correct. Wherever there are kids, old Private G. I. is right there to see that they get a break. Even a second lieutenant could have guessed that this was a regular occurrence. The offering in this case was a couple of loaves of bread, a huge fish, and several small cans of corned beef. The bread and fish were doubtless baksheesh to make the kids take the corned beef, for every can of it we could persuade somebody else to take, the less of it we'd have to eat.

It was amusing to see the G.I.'s trying to tell those kids to scram before the Burra Sahib got back. The kids were blithely ignorant of what the G.I.'s were saying; so, to avoid an awkward situation of the C.O.'s finding them with that stuff, I walked over and shouted, "*Jau!*" in a terrible voice. They ran into a rice paddy from which they watched until we drove off.

"Kind of—er—little kids," said the driver lamely after we were on the way back to camp.

"Oh, sure!" I said. "Kind of fat and healthy-looking, though, don't you think? Must be getting regular chow somewhere," I added innocently.

"Could be," said Snuffy, the driver, grinning on the off side of his face.

I was thinking it would be the irony of history if twenty or thirty years from now one of those kids rose to be a second Gandhi. If he should be faced with the decision to throw the vast resources of India either for or against the United States, I hoped he would remember the loaves of bread and the fishes rather than the corned beef we had given him.

The Colonel interrupted my thoughts with, "Chaplain, that was an experience I'll never forget. From now on, every man who complains about the chow draws the garbage detail to Tongi.

"Remember Bihar?" I said laconically.

"—, yes! But this was worse. Those people were savages; these are civilized. They did it for diversion; these, from necessity."

And that was true all right. The garbage dump for our base down in Bihar had been about three miles out in the country. The natives there were Santal aborigines, as black as a crow. There was no food shortage there, but the Santals liked American chow; so they came out of the jungles daily to contend with the Pi dogs, kites, and vultures for the contents of the garbage trucks. I have excellent photographs of this melee—for such it was. I've seen a kid coming up out of the mess with an overripe banana in his fist when a kite took it from him in a terrific swoop before he could begin to get the skin off.

A few days after our visit to the river at Tongi I was attracted by a commotion outside one of the mess halls. The native K.P.'s had been reporting trouble with a gang of kids who insisted on robbing the garbage cans. Orders had been issued to clear them from the post because of the menace they presented to the health of our camp. These homeless kids bring in cholera, smallpox, and a dozen native diseases to plague the white man. But orders mean little to old Private G. I. as far as kids are concerned; so the kids continued to be a nuisance.

The fracas today, however, was different. I walked over to investigate, and there were two Indian K.P.'s trying to beat an old man away from the garbage can. He was on his knees, and through all their blows he resolutely stuck to his job of scooping slop out of the can, which contained a mixture of waste coffee, bread crusts, vegetable scraps, and bits of meat, all in a stinking mess. He was piling this filth into his loincloth, which he had removed and spread out for the purpose. Finally he had enough, and gathering the corners of his dhoti together, he picked the dripping mess up and silently moved off. That was garbage that not even a hog would eat.

And now the newspapers were beginning to take note of the famine and consequent starvation. Nearly every day there were reports of people too famished to defend themselves from the Pi dogs in the fight for garbage. And when an Indian relegates anything to the garbage heap, you can bet your life it is *really* garbage.

Hindus and Moslems alike organized body-collection details to clear the streets of the dead; the Moslems to bury, the Hindus to burn the bodies. The burning ghats in all the cities were working to exhaustion. In Calcutta they started burning the bodies in piles because the carts brought them in

faster than individual pyres could be built. The stench of the ghats was such that neither the Colonel nor I could stand it even for the fraction of a minute necessary to take a picture. We fled the moment it burst upon us.

Early in August we made our first visit to Dacca. The Colonel and I had been invited to tea at the home of an American woman who had married an Indian. The lady was a New Yorker; so was the Colonel; thus we were eager to meet her. To get to her home we had to traverse about a mile and a half of the main street—a mile and a half littered with people in every stage of emaciation and starvation. We had plenty of film for our 35-millimeter camera; so we stopped again and again to photograph these hopeless unfortunates. Each time we stopped our car was besieged by hordes of starving men, women, and children who had flocked in from the rural areas in the hope of finding something to eat.

Some of the sights would have made the Japs quail, perhaps. Here was a little girl about five years of age crying her eyes out beside her prostrate mother while a baby sucked dismally on the shriveled breasts. The mother was dead. Over there a mother wailed and moaned over a dead boy while two other small children were living their last hours in her arms. In the middle of the street an old man was supporting a young girl of about sixteen in his arms. She had collapsed while walking. Her breasts, which evidently had once been well and firmly developed, now hung limp.

Giving alms in such a welter of misery was out of the question; we had tried it on the first pitiful cases and had nearly been pulled to pieces by the frantic beggars for our pains. We were glad to hurry by.

Near the bazaar we came upon two Catholic Sisters of Charity ministering to a little boy who was horribly scalded.

Their story was that the child had gone up to one of the shops to beg and the shopkeeper, doubtless exasperated by the never-ending train, had thrown boiling water over him. The child wasn't even whimpering. I was sorry afterward that I hadn't found out who had thrown the water, and turned him over to the ministration of Greenwald and Peeler.

By the time we reached our destination we must have passed about a hundred cases of collapse from starvation. Indeed, we were glad to be inside and away from it all.

The cup of tea which Mrs. G. had prepared for us was welcome; but in a few minutes she excused herself on the ground that she was operating a food line for the destitute. We went along with her. What we had seen up to now proved to be merely the outposts of starvation; this food line was headquarters. About two thousand men, women, and children milled around to get in line for a free helping of boiled rice and dal, or lentils, savored with curry. No! Two thousand sacks of human bones. The impression was one of a succession of sparrow-legs, potbellies, and washboard ribs. And there were eighteen such food lines in Dacca right then. We visited some of the other lines and saw much the same thing, except that at the last one the food had given out and hundreds were left unfed. That was an experience. Dozens of mothers with children prostrated themselves before us and hugged our feet, imploring us for food and pointing to their haggard children. We emptied our pockets, and those who were still without began to cry hysterically. All around, children lay patiently waiting for death. Many were so far gone that they could not take the rice and dal at all. Only barley water and milk would save some, if they could be saved at all.

And close behind stalked that inevitable companion of famine, disease. The symptoms of cholera, dysentery, small-



pox, and a dozen loathsome skin diseases could be seen everywhere. We walked with death that evening, for every morning a dozen or so bodies were cleared off the main road alone.

The mystery to us was that these people starved peacefully. They made no effort to riot or to steal. They just sat and starved without complaint. Trains of bullock and buffalo carts passed along the roads hauling rice to the riverside for shipment, but never was as much as a finger lifted to molest them. The average American or European in such circumstances would have caused trouble a plenty. The only possible explanation is that the people were suddenly too weak and emaciated to resort to direct action, so that their peculiar fatalism, which looks upon what happens as inevitable and necessary, kept them from agitating. The Hindu doctrine of Karma could well produce such a quiescence; but this would not account for the supineness of the Moslems, unless they, too, have a philosophy of fatalism, which is more than likely.

Most of the way home we drove in silence. Finally the Colonel spoke.

"Chaplain, this is where you take over. What can be done from our end?"

"Quite a bit, I think, sir, if you say the word."

"You have *carte blanche*. See what you can do within reason."

By noon the next day we had organized the first American Food Reclamation Project in India under the personal direction of Colonel Torgils G. Wold, U.S.A.A.F. The staffs at all the mess halls had willingly agreed to keep all waste foods in clean cans and to release such of their stocks as would perish before use. And there was a heck of a lot of it, I can tell you!

But now came the problem of distribution. We certainly didn't want the destitute to come near the camp and bring

their communicable diseases with them; so we had to have some agency to take the food, prepare it, and distribute it. I hied me to Judge D., an influential local politician who was interested in the food lines.

"It's — kind of you," he said, trying to sound American, "but there is a problem: You see, you people eat meat and cook with animal fat. Now these people will not riot over their bodies, but they will over their souls. The Moslems will riot if they find they have been fed pork; whereas the Hindus will riot if they are fed beef. Or if they are given food that has come in contact with beef."

It was on my tongue to say, "Well, if they're going to be that choosy, let 'em starve," but I remembered that people are not always responsible for their beliefs. So I forbore.

The problem seemed hopeless until the Colonel remembered the two Sisters we had met ministering to the scalded boy. Perhaps they could tell us how this stuff could be distributed.

We found the Convent without too much trouble, and there we heard fresh tales of human misery and degradation. The prioress, Mother Aimée, a gentle soul from Alsace, timidly asked the Colonel if he would like to accompany some of the Sisters that evening as they made their rounds with milk and medicine to the hovels where the beggars huddled for the night. And, by gosh, he said, "Yes."

That was a night never to be forgotten. Neither of us could wait until we got home to take a bath and throw our clothes out. Of the half-dozen beggar camps we visited that night, by far the worst was the one in Chowk bazaar. The street was about eight feet wide. On one side was a row of dilapidated vacant buildings with the fronts all knocked out, and here people of all ages and in all stages of disease and emaciation miserably awaited the dawn, when the strongest

of them could once more sally forth on the hopeless hunt for food. Most of them were too weak to rise, and down their throats the Sisters poured a little milk and barley water and gave them a pill if they had fever—which most of them did, for malaria was raging then.

Whole families lay out in rows, many breathing their last. Parentless children snuffled dismally in little groups, pausing occasionally to scratch their sores. Most of them were nearly naked, and therefore were easy prey for the clouds of mosquitoes.

There were no toilet nor sewage facilities—there rarely are in an Indian town; and, since many of these people had dysentery or cholera or other diseases, the stench was nauseating to the last degree. It seeped through the handkerchiefs which we held over our mouths and noses.

And those Sisters! Unperturbed and unruffled by it all, they tried, it seemed, to pick up every child, pat it, and murmur words of endearment. One of them always began with "Poor lit-tel thing!" Then came a stream of native talk. They went in among those people, filth or no filth, and did what they could, continually lamenting the fact that there were so many to be taken care of by so few and with so little. The Catholic Church gained a new respect from me that night, even though I am an enemy of autocracy in all of its forms.

On the other side of that hovel were the godowns, stacked to the ceilings with sacks of rice, and the babus cheerfully weighing it up into small packages for the black market. The government-controlled price was 30 rupees a maund (eighty pounds); in the black market it brought as high as 150 rupees a maund. Despite the fact that there were tons of rice right there in full view, there was none available in the bazaar at the controlled rate. The normal price of rice is

between 4 and 6 rupees a maund; so even the controlled rate of 30 rupees placed it beyond reach of the average Indian.

Nor could legal action be taken against the profiteers without extreme difficulty. The shopkeepers flatly refused to give bills for purchases; so one had no way to prove how much he had paid; and they were too crafty to take payment in the presence of witnesses. So the poor starved while the politicians beleaguered the British and the merchants reaped a harvest of profit.

There were suggestions of confiscation of warehouse stocks in the public interest, but no action was ever taken. And in any case, the babus would have been amply warned so that they could hide their supplies. Our boys could have done the job nicely in the beginning, and the only arms needed would have been a good solid boot; but it was pointed out to us that such a course of action would result in a pro-Japanese movement inspired by the merchants, and then our troubles might *really* begin. As it was, the populace was being told by the Gandhi wallahs that the famine was due to the coming of the Americans who were confiscating the food stocks. But we never ate rice, which is the Indian's staple food, although it was true that we were hogging the market on chickens and eggs.

"Where has the rice gone?"

That was the question which every native asked in the fall of 1943. Some charged the British with exporting it; the British charged the merchants with running it down to Burma. A few contended the military had exhausted the stocks.

Just what did happen to the rice, I don't know. But this I know: tons of it were available in Bengal during the height of the famine, but the merchants had it sewn up; and they

weren't British merchants, either—although I don't want this to be interpreted as excusing that nearly innocent race.

For weeks we watched the trains of bullock and buffalo carts hauling rice down to the river to be shipped and hidden. We could get no satisfaction whatever as to its destination, and, try as we might, we never found out the destination of any of it. It was "just going on the river."

I was present one day when the principal of one of the colleges was calling the district commissioner on the telephone demanding rice for the students' hostel.

"There is no rice available," replied the politician.

"Then confiscate the rice in these bullock carts which are passing my house right now," suggested the principal. (The politician had a right to do this.)

"Very well, I will," replied the politician.

But the confiscation crew arrived six hours later—when the rice had been safely loaded and shipped.

We still had no agency through which to distribute our salvaged foods; so upon our return to the Convent we broached the matter to Mother Aimée, hoping to get suggestions. She jumped at the project and said it was the answer to her prayer to the Little Flower.

"We will take all you can send in," she said, "and clean it and cook it and give it out. We have ten Sisters and all these orphan girls to help with the work."

"But it will be too much work for your group, Mother," the Colonel protested. "You have no idea of what we can send in."

"Then let us try it. You see, Colonel, the problem is to get the food out to the women and children in the lanes and byways who are too weak to come to the food lines, and to keep it from the fat babus who manage to get everywhere

and get everything. This is what the Sisters and the girls can do."

We went in, then, for a cup of tea, and Mother Aimée talked to us of the Little Flower of Lisieux and sundry other saints on the assumption that we had done nothing all our lives but study the lives of saints.

"Who is this St. Lizzie she was telling us about, Chaplain?" asked the Colonel. "Quite a gal, from what Mother Aimée says."

"St. Therese, the Little Flower of Lisieux, or something like that," I replied.

The Colonel and I went in with the first load of salvaged food the next day. Outside the Church of England we paused to take pictures of a pair of vultures and a half-starved Pi dog working over the carcass of a dead dog or a small goat. Between them they tugged the carcass all over the street, and soon the entrails were scattered everywhere. We moved closer, the better to see the action; then we turned silently away and walked back to the car. It was the body of a child that was being consumed. It was horrible! We mentioned this monstrous thing to Mother Aimée when we reached the Convent, indignant that a child should die on the main street of Dacca and its body be left to the dogs and vultures.

Mother Aimée whispered a prayer and then said:

"It is India. These Hindus will not touch a body that's lying on the street. They are afraid of making themselves unclean. These days, the dogs and the vultures begin tearing at the bodies even before the life is completely out of them. The Sisters report many cases of children, too weak to resist, being eaten alive. We call the Civil Hospital many times a day to try to get some action taken, but there is no such thing as immediate action here. The ambulance comes several

hours later, and by then the poor people are dead and perhaps half eaten."

And it was the absolute truth. Every time we called on Mrs. G., the American lady, for weeks after that we found her half insane from trying to get the local authorities to organize a service to remove the stricken to the hospital.

Even the press began to report cases of people being eaten by dogs and vultures in the daytime and by jackals at night; but soon such things lost their horror; there were too many of them.

Then the desertions started. We noticed it first on the streets. Children of three, four, and five would be found crying their eyes out. Their parents, we assumed, had died of starvation. This was happening all around us, of course; but every night the number of children left at the Convent door was becoming greater and greater; so we knew that desertions were going on on a wide scale. Those left at the Convent were invariably diseased—Bengal rot, a loathsome fungus disease being common.

The origin of these skin diseases is not hard to trace. Unlike some Eastern peoples, the Indian washes. He washes himself religiously often. But the only prerequisite for this ceremony (it is a ceremony) is water. Not clean water; just water, any water. When the monsoons are pouring their floods, this is all right because practically all the water is clean enough for bathing; but when the rains are over and the streams and ponds dry up, the Indian will bathe just as religiously in any sewer. I've seen them wash their saris and their bodies in a filthy mud hole green with scum and in which a couple of water buffalo are lolling, and then scoop up the water and drink it!

Frequently we would visit the Convent to see how things

were going, and it always made our flesh creep to get in among the crowd gathered there for the food. Those Sisters put us to very shame; they would pick up those dirty children and soothe and caress them like mothers. Many of the children were leprous, no doubt, and dozens of them were afflicted with one of another curse of the East: dysentery, malaria, smallpox, even cholera. I wouldn't have touched one of those kids for all the baksheesh in Bengal! Without exception they were indescribably filthy and were smeared with human excreta from lying in the beggar hovels at night.

In it all, here and there a deserted child would be laughing and smiling! I know not what caused this rare miracle, but our boys used to stop and gaze in awe at the wonder of it. Here was some future Indian Will Rogers born to laugh at trouble and, if he survived, to lead his people to laugh at trouble. One day the boys picked one up and took him to the Convent. The Sisters named him Sansone and assured us he would be sent to a boys' orphanage as this was for girls only. He's still there, though, and we call him Samson. I think we have him more aptly named, for he is a giant of good cheer. He never comes near us without sporting a grin all his own as he surveys us from beneath his curly black hair. Everything is glee to Samson; if I as much as wink at him, he rocks in childish mirth, his tiny hands clasped between his knees. He's as naked as on the day he was born except for a string tied around his loins with some sort of amulet attached to it. I never see him without thinking of Paul Laurence Dunbar's "Little Brown Baby wif Spa'klin' Eyes." Only Samson doesn't laugh with his eyes alone; he laughs with his whole body.

Some day the Sisters will have to send Samson to a boys' orphanage, and eventually he'll be a Roman Catholic. If only he comes under the care of someone like the gentle, lovable,



and incurably happy little Irish Sister Mary Carmel, who sees neither white nor black nor brown, and whose philosophy of color is:

The puny soul his ego blows quite thin  
By calling man's attention to his skin.  
But White and Black, like labels on a can,  
Not always do they gauge who dwells within.

Ah, what a shabby garment for our pride!  
To think that some should wear it to deride  
The Dusky Folk! Are not all born without a chance  
To choose the color of our hide? \*

As the famine progressed, rice and other grains were shipped in, and government stocks were released for distribution to the poor; but of every ton thus made available not much more than half reached the people for whom it was intended. The rest was stolen or finagled by the babus and politicians, who managed to get it to the black market. Hundreds of such rascals were accused by the authorities and by public people, but only rarely was one punished. They were either Moslem or Hindu, and consequently there was much confusion as to how and by whom they were to be tried. The standard defense of the Hindu grafter was that he was being framed by the Moslems; the Moslems made the same charge against the Hindus. Thus were the authorities powerless to take action; for to do so might result in another flare-up of the communal strife which made the city a shambles from 1941 to 1943.

Once one of our officers took the law into his own hands. His bearer was unable to purchase rice except at black-market prices. The officer accompanied his bearer to a shop,

\* From "The Wheel of Life," by Thomas H. Clare.

seized a sack of rice and threw down the control price, and left, leaving the babu wailing and moaning over his ill luck. That was only once, though. The news of the event spread like wildfire, and in no time at all the rice had disappeared except for paltry quantities of five or ten pounds.

Even the government was forced to buy rice in the black market and resell to its servants at the control price in order to keep the wheels of government moving. So what chance was there of the control price being enforced?

The rice shortage actually did not confront us out at the base until September, 1943. Certain stocks had been supplied us by the government for issuance to our coolies. When these stocks gave out, work on our runways and revetments practically ceased. Our workers had to go on the food hunt with the rest of the population. They were very slow, indeed, to move over to a new diet of wheat and vegetables. "Rice" and "food" are synonymous to the Indian; all other foods are just dressing. So: no rice, no work.

What part did the British have in all this mess? There may be an inside story; but, if there is, it has escaped me. All the British I met looked on and fumed helplessly just as we did. They got the blame for it here in India and throughout the world; but that they had little to do with it except negatively, I am convinced. I say "negatively" in the sense that they could have confiscated food stocks at the beginning of the trouble. They were afraid that to do so would start a wave of revolt in favor of the Japanese, and perhaps they were right. I know that the government of the province had to step in and take over all relief measures from the Moslem politicians who were bungling the job and waxing fat on it. The British may have some things to answer for in India, but the famine in Bengal cannot be counted against them except, perhaps, from the standpoint of a weak and timid

policy. This I know: our boys were itching to step in and organize the food system of the Dacca district; and we could have done it, too. To judge from the way they found things that weren't even lost or hidden, some of our boys from Brooklyn and South Chicago could have found all the rice in Bengal in a week.

As the time for the new crop drew near, late in November, rice appeared again in the markets—a fact which supports the contention that it had been hidden for the black market. But now the selling of rice had almost ceased in favor of trading in rice futures. The grafter was not to be outdone by the expected bumper crop. No, indeed. Now he traded rice to those who looked as if they had any prospects on the basis of one bag for two: one could get a sack of rice now in exchange for a note promising to repay with two sacks of rice when the new crop came in.

Some of the notes went by the board, of course, because those who gave them pulled through the famine too weak to resist the epidemics which came with the chilly weather of winter. And a man who survived the famine and the epidemics still had the moneylender to deal with.

The moneylender is one of the major curses of India. His rates and methods would make the most unconscionable small-loan shark in the United States gnash his teeth. He is either an Afghan or a Pathan—always a Mohammedan. He is stalwart, swarthy, hawk-nosed, and wears flowing robes in which a waistcoat is most conspicuous. In one hand he carries his “rosary”; in the other, his lathi (club-cane). Somewhere in his clothes he has a dagger. He is universally feared in India and has been known to turn himself to many a shady deal.

Mother Aimée assured me that some moneylenders were

expert at hypnotism and by this means had enticed girls away to the brothels. Several Convent girls whom the Sisters had rescued reported that they did not realize what was happening.

In normal times the "Kabulese," as the moneylenders are called, operate like this: In every town and village they have a spotter who, for a consideration, keeps them informed on local affairs. Thus they know when marriages are to take place, who needs money, and they are kept well posted on the prospects of business. Let us suppose an Indian cultivator, Abdul Mojib, also of the Faithful, has arranged a marriage for his daughter. Some time before the ceremony is to take place, he is waited upon by a Kabulese who speaks to him affably about the ease of obtaining a loan. Of course, Abdul would like to put on a good show; it will enhance his prestige in the community. After appealing in many subtle ways to Abdul's vanity, the moneylender leaves him to mull over the matter. In a week or two he is back. The chances are that he will find Abdul ready to ask for a loan with his crops as security. It will cost only five rupees a month to borrow forty rupees, he is told. In his ignorance Abdul never sees it as sixty rupees a year—one and one-half times the amount of the loan for interest alone. He accepts the money eagerly and makes his mark on the paper.

A month later the moneylender is back for his money; but Abdul has no money, and it will be several months before the crops come in.

"By the beard of the Prophet!" bursts out the moneylender. "I made you the loan in good faith, and you signed a paper promising to repay me with interest. Now you say you have no money. You scoundrel! Did you not know you would have no money?"

Abdul is in a bad spot. To be sure, he knew he would

have no money for months. Can the moneylender wait? Well, yes—but only if Abdul signs another paper doubling the interest. Abdul may demur at this, but a smart rap from the club-cane helps him make up his mind. He is now in the net, and his ruination is sure although he may not realize this for another year or two. No matter what he pays, he gets no receipt. When he can no longer pay a single anna, he is sold up and dispossessed, and he moves to the city as a beggar.

In such fashion had the poor cultivators of Bengal mortgaged their all to survive the famine; and now the moneylenders were parading the streets by the dozen, looking for their victims.

Often I was tempted to explain to our boys who these men were and how they operated so that I might enjoy seeing them run out of town on a rail. This much I did: Whenever I saw one of these bloodsuckers badgering a native, I went up and gave him the old “*Jau!*” in a big way. Invariably he would slink off to await another opportunity. What kind of internal rot must a man suffer from, to permit himself to fatten on the misery of others?

The new rice crop brought the price of rice down to 10 rupees for a short time. It was soon back to 22 per maund, though, and rose steadily. The authoritative Calcutta *Statesman* forecast an even worse famine for the fall. And why not? Millionaires were made on the last one. In the midst of a bumper crop there was already talk of famine. There would be a famine all right. The poor were already trickling back into the cities in search of food and work, again bringing with them disease and filth.

Perhaps a rationing scheme might help to save the situation; but the difficulties in the way were enormous. Half of these

people had no fixed abode; they lived and slept just where they happened to be. They were illiterate. They were about half Hindu and half Moslem and could therefore be depended upon to work against each other to frustrate any governmental scheme.

Nor must we overlook the fact that the average Indian does not consider food grains other than rice as food. He'll use them, yes; but he must have food to eat with them—that is, rice. When the Indian learns to substitute wheat and other grains for rice, famines will be far less serious, and the racketeer far less successful.

## THE CONVENT

SNUFFY was from Oregon. He was pudgy, blue-eyed, and had a small sandy mustache which hung like a lintel over an irresistible and infectious grin. Snuffy was a truck driver in the 90th, and had been ever since we started the outfit in Karachi. In all that time he had driven the same truck, a two-and-a-half-ton vehicle which he affectionately called "Lulu Belle." By good fortune, Snuffy was selected to drive the food-salvage truck, in this case Lulu Belle, to the Convent every evening. Snuffy made a religion of it.

I had started this food-salvage project. Consequently I used, at first, to go with the truck to the Convent, in order to see that things went right. In the beginning, the Sisters treated Snuffy with great reserve; they seemed to be suspicious of his complete informality and strange western twang. Snuffy addressed them all as "Old Girl," "Babe," or "Honey"—terms which horrified them and sent them to many a novena, I'm afraid. They held their peace, however, for fear, I suspect, that to reprove him would prejudice him against the Convent and its work. They may have thought that I ought to admonish him to show more respect for their office; but I had known Snuffy from the very beginning, and was confident that, within two or three weeks, these Sisters would be putting on special prayer meetings to thank God for the benison of Snuffy.

Then I went to Darjeeling on a fortnight's leave, leaving the food-salvage project in the capable hands of Snuffy—one of the best "field procurement" merchants I've ever known,

incidentally. On my return, the first thing I did was to accompany the "honey wagon" to the Convent to see how things had gone in my absence. There had been a revolution!

I saw Snuffy suddenly disappear into an inner court of the Convent; curious, I followed right in after him. There was a rush of Sisters, and Snuffy, after some preliminary remarks, fished around and produced from somewhere two rolls of American toilet paper, which he handed to the young and bashful Sister Mary Magdalene with complete sang-froid.

Good gosh! I said to myself. Snuffy has overdone it this time. This is the last time he'll come in here.

Snuffy looked at me and winked. "He, he he! Heh, heh! Got to look after my gals." He winked at them and then again at me. "He, he! Yippee!"

The response of the Sisters floored me.

"Oh, Snuffy! How thoughtful of you!"

Then they looked at me, and, by gosh! it was I who blushed.

"Oh, come, Snuffy, there's a dear, and drink your tea while it's still hot, and eat your pancakes. Sister Sebastian made some special for you tonight. You come, too, Chaplain."

In a half-daze I walked into yet another sanctum. And there the Sisters had set a table under a nice blue electric light; and the table looked like home: tablecloth, fine dishes, cutlery. They hovered around Snuffy, poured his tea, helped him to more pancakes, urged him to eat, and fussed around as if he had been the bishop with a toothache, forcing chow on him until he was ready to pop. The while they kept repeating:

"Poor Snuffy, you must be tired. Come now, Snuffy, eat more pancakes. You must be hungry, too."

I sat around there like a spare jack handle. Finally Snuffy



was skin-tight, and rumbled forth to check on the coolies who were unloading the truck.

As he passed out of the door, I said awkwardly, "Quite a lad, that Snuffy."

The response was immediate and almost a Greek chorus: "An angel! Yes, indeed! A gift from heaven, Chaplain."

The Sisters clapped their hands against their forelegs and laughed.

"He pumps water for us. He chops wood for us, and even steals it for us, we think. Really, we all say we don't know how in the world we ever got along without Snuffy, Chaplain. We pray for him every night, and Mother has all the children praying for him. Poor Snuffy, isn't it?"

And it wasn't only the Sisters. The kids howled and shrieked like dervishes when they saw him coming, and they swarmed over him by the dozen. And he had a nickname for every one of them: Sugar Lips, Flower Face, Snooks, Petals, etc. Upon the observation of which I drew three conclusions: Snuffy was the best fed G.I. in India; Snuffy was the happiest G.I. in India; Snuffy was the best loved G.I. in India. No wonder the kids all swore that they were going to name their first babies "Snuffy" after him. Snuffy with his G.I. haircut, his anything but G.I. uniform with a tiny baseball cap perched on the top of his head, and his drawling western twang! He soon knew all the Sisters by name as well as the kids. The Sisters used to threaten the children with, "All right—if you don't eat all your rice, you can't see Snuffy tonight!"

If Snuffy called the Sisters anything other than "Babe," "Old Girl," or "Honey" now, they felt mightily let down, indeed. Mother Aimée used to give him a lecture every night on going to church. "He, he, he!" I'd hear him cackle. "He,

he, he! The bells'd bust theyselves laughing if I goes in a church. He, he, he!"

Mother Aimée would sigh and turn to me. "A terrible thing for a wonderful man like Snuffy to go to— that is, not to go to heaven, Chaplain, isn't it?"

"I wouldn't mind exchanging his chances for mine, Mother," I'd say.

Gradually I came to know those Convent folk better and to win their confidence somewhat, though never to the extent that Snuffy did. It used to be a nice place to spend an evening drinking tea and listening to Mother Aimée's lore accumulated through thirty-five years in India—enriched by a magnificent sense of humor. For all her solemn appearance, Mother Aimée was an incurable spoofer and practical joker, and her innocence was only feigned. She was on to everything and everybody. She knew all the politicians and their schemes. She even knew the Kumar, Prince Ramendra of Bhowal, and could offer valuable evidence to settle the lawsuit about his supposed death and resurrection if she were permitted. This prince who died and came back to life under peculiar circumstances was a friend of Mother Aimée before his supposed death. At that time he had had certain conversations with Mother which he was able to recall and repeat when he appeared in Dacca to claim his inheritance, which was denied him by his family because of his supposed death. Nothing has happened in Bengal in the past twenty-five years of which Mother doesn't know the inside story.

Mother Aimée's cross took the form of three Irish nuns who fought like tigers over Irish politics. One of these Sisters was a supporter of De Valera; another backed Cosgrove; the third had thrown in her lot with General Duffy and the Irish Republican party. Mother Aimée, being an Alsatian, was

the anvil upon which they beat their chorus. As she was telling me about it, she folded her hands and tried to look pious.

"Oh, it is a terrible thing, isn't it, Chaplain, for nuns to fight like that. Only they were Irish nuns, see," she added apologetically.

"And in a Convent, Mother!" I exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes, in a Convent. 'Shame,' I said. Oh, it was terrib— Ha, ha, ha! Oh, excuse me, Chapla— Ha, ha, ha, ha!" She groped for a handkerchief. "I can't help laughing, Chaplain; you see, I played a trick on one of them. The fiery one. She was a spitfire, isn't it, and because she could talk faster, she used to put the other two in the wrong. It was terrible how that girl could fight, isn't it?"

"Must have been a business," I said sympathetically.

"Yes. Well, this fighting one had a brother who was a priest in Ireland; so I said, isn't it, 'Why don't you write to Brother Priest and ask him to tell you the truth about Ireland and stop this quarrel once and for good, isn't it.' So she did. A long letter, asking her brother to tell her the truth about General Duffy, if he was the scoundrel the other two nuns said he was. Ha, ha, ha!

"When after a fortnight, isn't it, I wrote a letter myself and had one of the Fathers mail it for me in Calcutta, supposed to be from her brother, isn't it—"

Mother Aimée burst into laughter over the memory of it.

"And wasn't she green, isn't it, Chaplain, to swallow that letter with the Indian postage on it! 'Dear Sister,' I wrote, 'it is all true. I have lost faith in General Duffy. He is a scoundrel, a rascal, and a deceiver.' Isn't it. And all kinds of things like that.

"When she got this letter and read it she was quiet for several days and we got some peace around the Convent for

a change. But she was so subdued that I decided to talk to her, isn't it.

"'What is the matter, Sister?' I asked. 'Did you get bad news from home?'

"'Oh, Mother! I'm so ashamed,' she said, and I couldn't stop from laughing, isn't it. Ha, ha, ha! 'I don't know how to face Sister Bertha and Sister Carmel; they were right about General Duffy. My brother wrote and told me all about him. Oh, the rascal!' I was shrieking with laughter; so I had to leave her for the time, isn't it. Then I told her, 'Go now and tell the others that you are sorry!' It was a week before I told her the truth, isn't it. And I wouldn't have told her then, only the other two were fighting now. Such nuns!"

"Did I hear you mention Sister Carmel? Not Sister *Mary* Carmel, surely, Mother?"

"Oh, yes, Chaplain! She's as bad as the rest."

I was amazed. Sister Carmel is so lovely and gentle. "But I thought all nuns were interested in prayers, Mother, especially Sister Mary Carmel."

"Yes, isn't it. But these were only Irish nuns, Chaplain. That's why, isn't it," she said, hoping I would accept that as an explanation for this monastic defection.

"The Irish will fight in heaven, I guess, Mother," I said by way of agreement.

"Yes, isn't it. But then, our Lord is a good fighter, isn't it, Chaplain," she said, brightening up. "But He fought only sin," she added, lapsing once more into momentary sorrow and sounding as if she meant that it was too bad He didn't fight the Irish.

Whereupon I added, "Lucky for Him."

"Chaplain, you can't imagine what awful things some of these people do."

Mother Aimée had invited me to join Sister Mary Carmel

and her in a cup of tea, and she was telling me some of her experiences in India during her thirty years' sojourn there.

"Of course, it is all nonsense and superstition, but the common people are terrified of the magicians. Sister Mary used to be up in the Khasi Hills, and she can tell you the stories, believe me."

Sister Mary Carmel was a radiant creature although she had been ill for years with spinal T.B. and suffered intensely most of the time. She was born in the "Ould Sod," she said, in county Kerry, and had spent twenty years in India as a teaching missionary. Like Mother Aimée, she belonged to the order of Our Lady of the Missions.

"Come now." Mother Aimée smiled happily. It was patent that all her motherly instincts were lavished upon this fragile child. "The Chaplain is interested in magic. You lived with the Khasi people. You know magic. Tell him how it is, isn't it."

Mother Aimée's tone had that note of scold which was obviously intended to mask her love for this lovely girl. In every word and gesture she was saying, "I mustn't let myself get out of hand, or I'll hug this child to death."

I smiled knowingly over this mock severity, and settled myself for the recital of magic practices among the people of the Khasi Hills, on the border between India and Burma.

"I was new in India then," began Sister Mary Carmel. "I had been here only two months when Sister Mary Bertha and I were sent to the Khasi Hills to help Father Berger reopen the Khasi Mission. This mission was originally started by a group of German Fathers; but when the Great War came they had to leave India, and all the good they did was lost."

Mother Aimée clasped her hands and sighed audibly over the catastrophe.

"Bad business," I murmured sympathetically.

"The very first thing I saw," continued Sister Mary Carmel, "when I went out the first day was a white woman living in a filthy hovel in filthy rags. Now there is a disease in India, an intestinal disease, which makes the natives look like white people,\* and at first sight I thought that this was one of these women. But when I spoke to her I found she was really a white woman, and a beautiful white woman with lovely auburn hair. She had two children, both of them very dark, but obviously her own children. She pleaded with us to go away and not let her husband see us talking to her.

"Gradually we found out about her. She was from Cardiff, Wales, and had met her husband when his ship came into port there. He had come to her father's tobacco shop to buy cigarettes, and she had run away with him. She was just sixteen then. He got her to India and up into the Khasi Hills. Evidently he had some kind of hold on her, for she was terrified of him and resisted all our suggestions to come with us to the Convent and bring the children along.

"After a while we did manage to persuade her to come to the Convent. Then we washed her and dressed her and rushed her at once to Calcutta and put her in charge of friends, there to be sent home on the next boat. To this day we don't know how it happened, but she was back in the Khasis before we were, and her husband had gotten the children from the Convent. She refused to leave again. There, now!"

"Magic! Devil worship! That's what it is," said Mother Aimée vehemently. "Tell him about the Devil worship, child."

"Oh, yes! Isn't it terrible? But it's the truth, as sure as I'm sitting here in front of you. Very few people know about it, and I know because I've seen it. It's terrible! Sure now!"

\* She probably meant leucoderma.

"Well, go on! Tell him!" Mother Aimée was impatient.

"One day, when Sister Mary Bertha and I were on our rounds, we heard a woman screaming. About a hundred yards ahead of us a woman was being held down by two men. We ran up, and then the men ran off. The woman was screaming hysterically and bleeding heavily from the nose. We took her to the Convent and treated her. Her face swelled up beyond recognition, and she was hysterical most of the time. But we did manage to get out of her some details of what had happened.

"These two men, she said, had stopped her and asked to be directed somewhere or another, and then suddenly they seized her and thrust two small bamboo tubes up into her nose and drained off a cupful of blood into a small dish. The woman was raving-mad by the end of the week, and on Sunday she died. Evidently the bamboo tubes had pierced her brain."

"What in the world did they want her blood for?" I asked.

"It's their religion," answered Sister Mary Carmel. "These hill people are Devil worshipers. There are two kinds of them: the aboriginal Khasis, called the Sintaings, and the Khasis themselves. Both have the same religion, but the Sintaings are the worst. They have no written language at all. Proper savages, they are.

"God is good, they say; He won't do us any harm. But the Devil is bad, and we must keep him satisfied. He always makes himself in the form of a small snake about six inches to a foot long, called the taleng. To pacify the Devil, the snake, which is kept in a glass jar, must be fed on human blood drawn from the living brain. That is why they thrust the bamboo tubes up into the nose.

"The blood is not all of the same value. The Khasis are the highest race, they say; so their blood is best, especially

the blood of their women and children. Then comes the blood of other tribes, and lastly the blood of Europeans.

"The snake is fed only between the months of March and October; so during this time no one will go out at night for fear of the Nongshanaws."

"What are the Nongshanaws?" I asked, to be sure that my guess was right.

"The Nongshanaws look after the snakes. In fact, they are the only ones permitted to keep the snakes, or talengs."

"Have you seen any of these snakes?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, many times. But they never want anyone to see them. Once I called at a hut and the woman came running out and implored me not to enter in case the Devil would be angry with them and punish them. It happened that her husband was a Nongshanaw and had a taleng in the house. But we went in anyway. The Devil, indeed!"

"And have you ever been approached by the Nongshanaws, Sister?" I meant to kid her a little bit.

"Indeed I have. Sister Mary Bertha and I were accosted by two men one day who asked us the way to the Convent. One of the men had his hands thrust into his tunic. We were blithely telling him when a Khasi woman with whom we had done some business rushed up and shouted, 'Run—oh, please, run, Sisters! Can't you see it's the Nongshanaws?' And did we run!"

"Are there no police or guards up there? It seems to me that something ought to be done to give protection," I burst out.

"Yes, there are police. And they will chase the Nongshanaws off; but they'll never lay a finger to touch the rascals. Oh, it's terrible! The trouble we've had up there with that Devil worship! We've had to bar all our windows because the Nongshanaws used to reach in at night and steal the



children. Then after we barred the windows, they set the Convent on fire, hoping to stampede the children into the jungle. But the Mother Superior had an intuition; she marched all the children into the chapel, which did not burn!"

"It really is a very hard place to work in," said Mother Aimée sympathetically. "But come now, Sister, back to your rest."

"But I'm all right, Mother!" And turning to me: "She pampers me like a little child. Insists that I take a gharry or a ricksha everywhere I go."

But Sister Mary Carmel moved off, with Mother Aimée in tow. That good soul was back in two minutes.

"She hasn't eaten a meal in ten years, just takes a prepared milk food once a day." She said, "They did something to her up in those hills and she's been an invalid ever since. Poor little thing!"

"She's the most radiantly cheerful person I've ever met, Mother," I said. "I could listen to her all day long."

"Yes? Well, the next time I'll have her tell you about some more of the Khasi practices. You know, those people will never build a bridge across a stream unless they first sacrifice a woman and bury her body under the bridge. Then they carve her statue in the rocks near by. Even big bridges which the British build. The British have to close their eyes to it, or the bridge will not be built. But I'll have Sister Carmel tell you all about it next time, isn't it?"

But there was no next time. The lovely Sister Mary Carmel, who was always smiling and happy and the picture of health, collapsed a few days later; and after a terrible night of vomiting she waved farewell and passed over.

Just today I looked at some pictures taken by one of our men who bailed out over the Khasi Hills. He had walked out in fifteen days. One picture fascinated me. It was a picture

of a Khasi chief standing beside a pile of children's heads. The old boy had just completed a successful head hunt on a neighboring village. What tales might not Sister Mary Carmel have told, had she lived!

One evening just after supper I was "jeeping" into town. On the Navarpur Road I came upon two of the Sisters hurrying my way. I drew up to them and stopped.

"Oh, God's wish!" exclaimed Sister Monica, and they piled right in, their habits hanging draped around the windshield. "Hurry quick to the Convent, Chaplain, quick!"

The streets of Dacca are narrow and crowded at all times. Keeping my elbow on the horn button I cut a swath through that sea of humanity and had the Sisters at the Convent in record time.

Mother Aimée met us at the Convent door and a whispered conference followed. Mother told me to wait as she hurried inside. She came back in a few moments and handed something to the Sisters.

"Hurry now, isn't it, and give seven drops at first."

"Take them back to the hospital, Chaplain, isn't it," she said, turning to me.

Without a word I stepped on the gas and drove them to the British Evacuation Hospital in Kamna, which was packed with wounded men and disease cases from the Arakan front. There I left them, wondering what it was all about.

The next time I visited the Convent, we were in the inner parlor drinking tea (which I rated along with Snuffy now) when Mother Aimée said rather absently, "That poor boy is still living, Chaplain, isn't it?"

"What do you mean, Mother?"

"Oh, it's like this." She came back to earth at once, and leaned toward me confidentially. "You know, the Sisters visit

the hospital every day. I know I can tell you this, Chaplain, because you will not give us away, isn't it. These poor boys, you know, they're far away from home and lonely, isn't it. Well, this boy was very sick, Chaplain. The doctors at the hospital had given him up when the Sisters got there, and he was unconscious already. He would be dead by morning, they said. As soon as the Sisters heard it, they came running to me for the medicine. And this is wonderful medicine, Chaplain, but the Sisters have to pretend they're giving him the last sacrament, isn't it, or the doctors won't let them give this medicine. And they would stop the Sisters from going there if they knew we gave the boys medicine. Now his temperature is down to 102 and the doctor says he will live."

"And this medicine, Mother? Does it work? How did you come by it?" I knew Mother Aimée dispensed medicines, for I had fought my way through the crowds at the Convent door when the smallpox and the cholera epidemics were raging in Dacca.

"And now I'll tell you, Chaplain." She became increasingly confidential. "Many years ago there was a fine old man living here in Dacca. He kept a pharmacy on Islampur Road. Oh, a wonderful old man he was, Chaplain, isn't it, even if he wasn't a Christian. Well, one day an old man came in from the village to get some quinine for his son who had malaria, and while old Narayan was preparing it, this old rice wallah went up to him and asked him to add something to the quinine. Narayan humored the old man and added the stuff he requested and forgot all about it. Some years later, isn't it, old Narayan's son got malaria so bad the doctors gave him up. Then he remembered the stuff this old rice wallah had told him to add to the quinine. Well, the boy recovered and now owns the shop on the Islampur Road. You've seen it, isn't it."

"I don't recall, Mother. But how about this stuff he added to the quinine? Has it been tried on anybody else?"

"Dozens. It never fails, Chaplain. The Sisters have used it in their rounds and on many people given up by the doctors, isn't it."

"Do you know what it is, Mother?"

The good soul looked uncomfortable for a moment; then she said by way of evasion: "Old Narayan left the secret to his son, and the son won't tell anybody. I said to him one day, 'Ramata, why don't you send your father's secret to the government, isn't it, and help all these poor boys with malaria?'"

"'Mother, I am willing to supply them with all the medicine they will need if they will only give me the order,' he said. You see, Chaplain, he wants to be a big babu and make a lot of money, isn't it; so he will not give up the secret."

"How about the civil doctors? Don't they know about it? They must have heard about it if they've lived in Dacca any length of time."

"The civil doctors, Chaplain!" Mother burst out in wrath. She is a homeopathic doctor herself. "You can't do a thing with them! The Indian doctors don't want a quick remedy for anything because they won't make so much money, isn't it. And the European doctors won't pay any attention to Narayan because he's Indian. You know how that is, Chaplain, isn't it. They wouldn't think of asking favors of an Indian, isn't it."

"Well," I said, "our doctors will be glad to get the stuff and give it a trial. Our men are eager to find and try out new remedies, especially in time of war."

Mother merely smiled and said, "So, Chaplain?"

The next time I went to the Convent, Mother asked me

what our medics had said about the cure. I was hoping she would not ask me.

"And what did they say, Chaplain? Oh, yes, I know. They were polite, but they made you feel foolish and ignorant, isn't it? Ha, ha, ha! I've gone through it so often, isn't it."

"Well, Mother, I did feel like a gullible fool after I told them about it. As you say, they were polite and all that. But they smiled too d—— tolerantly to suit me!"

"Yes, isn't it."

Perhaps our medics are right. Perhaps this stuff is the product of a clever quack clever enough to deceive the shrewd Mother Aimée. Perhaps the people the Sisters cured with the stuff would have gotten well anyway. Perhaps the boy in the hospital survived in spite of the stuff rather than because of it. But somehow I feel that these people have something that should be looked into, and that right soon.

"Your tea is cold, Chaplain. Let me throw it out and give you some more. And it's the same with cholera, Chaplain, isn't it."

"Have you a medicine for cholera, too, Mother?"

"I have three medicines which we use on the poor people here and also when we travel around the village, isn't it. In my thirty-five years among the poor of India, Chaplain, I have learned many things. But only three good medicines, isn't it."

Our boys always see the Sisters wandering around looking for the sick and the dying, and it's many a lift we've given and many a body we've hauled to the Civil Hospital for them off the streets.

"You've learned a lot, all right, Mother. Wish I knew half of it."

"Yes, so do I, isn't it." That one didn't get by me, but I pretended it did. "Now in Naraingunge there used to live

an American missionary doctor. A Baptist, I think, isn't it, Chaplain. Well, Dr. Joseph was also a great botanist; he believed that all plants have curative potions if only we knew about them, isn't it. One day he discovered something that cures cholera, Chaplain. It isn't one drug; it's four. Three of them are common and well known, but the fourth is secret."

I was incredulous. "You mean it actually cures cholera, Mother?"

"It will even cure in the state of collapse!" Her voice rang out almost like a command.

Cholera is the scourge of the East. It may strike in the morning: by evening the patient is invariably dead of dehydration. The recovery rate is one of the lowest. One doctor told me that in the Dacca district fewer than fifteen people out of every hundred who get it recover.

"Four of our Sisters have had cholera, isn't it, Chaplain, and not one of them died. I have had it twice myself. Last year Rev. Westfield, the Protestant missionary, had it, and I sent one of the Sisters to look after him, and he got over it, isn't it. It will cure even in the last stages. Rev. Westfield still doesn't know what pulled him through."

"How many people know the secret of this stuff, Mother?" I asked.

"Only two: Dr. Joseph's son, who owns the Star Pharmacy, and I. I begged the old man to tell me what it was before he died, and I am under oath not to tell it, isn't it. But I have written it in my will, because the old man said nothing about writing it in my will, isn't it. It is called 'Chlorojit.' When the cholera is bad like it is now, the Sisters never go around without it. They give it to the people they find collapsed on the streets and in the railway stations, and even on the trains when they travel. You've never seen a bad cholera epidemic, isn't it, Chaplain?"

"Never, Mother. But I'd surely like to have some of that stuff to take with me when we move to Burma."

"Yes. Well, I'll have Sister Bertha make a little package for you and put in the dysentery medicine, too. You see, we always get dysentery, isn't it, Chaplain, because we travel out to the villages and have to eat and drink what we can and where we can. The dysentery cure is one of Dr. Joseph's cures, too."

We were both silent for a few minutes, then Mother Aimée concluded: "That's all, isn't it, Chaplain. But it took me thirty years to learn of these three remedies, isn't it."

I took my leave of the good soul and hurried home. Curiously I opened the package they had pressed into my hand at the Convent door. A small yellow package attracted me. I picked it up and read:

### CHLOROJIT

Best remedy for Cholera and Chronic  
Diarrhoea

### ONE HOUR'S CURE

I wonder! I wonder! Anyway, I'm willing to turn the stuff over to any reputable laboratory that's willing to investigate it, provided that, in the event it should be what Mother Aimée says it is, part of any profit go to the St. Francis Xavier Convent of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions. No! I am *not* a Catholic!

It was Bob Deal who first brought to my consciousness the fact that I was a story-teller of some merit when it came to handling kids. (A few others have made the discovery since, I think.) I was on the porch one bright spring afternoon, reading, when suddenly I became aware that a half-dozen kids were surveying me half in awe and half in suspicion.

Bob Deal was saying, "I know you can't tell it to look at him, 'cause he ain't much—but he is, all right."

"Better than Miss Fince?" asked one young skeptic.

"Ho, ho, ho!" Bob scoffed. "Miss Fince, Hell, yes!"

"What's all this about, Bobby?" I inquired.

"You know — well it's 'Bob,' and not 'Bobby'!"

"Sh! Bob, your mother might—"

"Yeah, Well, cut out the sissy stuff and tell these kids that you're the world champeen story-teller, Tom—er—er—Mr. Clare."

Bob was only six, but he could anticipate any verbal expression of Private G. I. He had lately recovered from a six-weeks siege of double pneumonia, during which I had dropped in for an hour each day to tell him stories and give his mother a chance to get a little rest. For some reason he was enthralled at my recitals, and we became fast friends. When his mother wasn't around, he called me "Tom." Or, if I referred to him as "Bobby," to tease him, he would just as slyly refer to me as "Tommy." (How do you like it yourself, you son of a gun?) Bob started me on a delightful road which reached its high point in telling stories to little Negro children at the Cleveland Hall Library, Chicago, on Friday afternoons.

On one of my visits to the Convent, it occurred to me that these Indian children were just like our own kids; wild about stories. They all speak English with that delightful clipped "chee-chee" accent of the Anglo-India; so making myself understood was no problem. I began with "Trusty and the Crane," and no sooner had I uttered the last word of the little verse,

To do a good deed whenever you can,  
Is good for bird or beast or man,



than they all burst out with, "Oh, Chaplain, another one, please, Chaplain!" So I knew I was a success. Thereafter I dropped in three or four evenings a week for stories and American games and songs. One night I took my portable phonograph. All my records were classics; so I borrowed some for the kids from Whitfield of the Signal Corps. I just grabbed a half-dozen at random and beat it. I turned the machine and records over to Julie, the oldest of the girls, and went to listen to some more of Mother Aimée's store of experience. When I came back, the kids had played Mary Martin's "Oh, Do It Again" until they knew it by heart. And was my face red! I quickly substituted "I Want to Get Back to West Virginia." "Oh, Do It Again" is still their first love, though.

Every evening that I visited the Convent I'd finish up with a cup of tea with Mother and the Sisters. Gradually they opened up more and more, and I gained an insight into the life within a Convent, its routine, inner politics, petty squabbles, and the many problems which a hundred and fifty children present.

Sometimes I arrived at seven-thirty only to find that the kids were already in bed. Mother Aimée would be as surprised as I. "That's Sister Anne!" she would say. "Oh, I tell you, Chaplain, she's an artful one, isn't it."

I would agree by silence.

"Fetch Sister Anne!" Mother's voice would ring out to no one in particular. While we were waiting for the culprit to appear, she'd say, "She wants to get them off early so she can do her office, Chaplain."

Soon Sister Anne would come before us. "What is this?" Mother would demand as sternly as her gentle nature would permit. "Why are the children in bed, isn't it? You know they love to be here when the Chaplain comes."

"My prayers, Mother, I—"

"Now, shame! Your prayers! Your prayers, indeed! The children are so happy when the Chaplain comes, isn't it, and your prayers, child! Our Lord will listen only to the children's prayers tonight, isn't it. All right, now go to your prayers! And say a prayer for the Chaplain and Mr. Mitra who lost his son."

Sister Anne, on the verge of laughter at Mother's attempts to be severe, would leave the room. None of the Sisters ever took her scoldings seriously. They adored her as their true Mother, while the kids openly worshiped her.

"Excuse me, a moment only, Chaplain, isn't it," she'd say, and then call softly to some sobbing child whose sobs had entirely missed me. "What is it, my child? Come here to Mother and tell me." And in would toddle some youngster who had been grievously wronged to the point of death by one of the Sisters or one of the other little girls. The cuddling and the caressing and the fondling that followed made me envious.

"Now, Chaplain, sit down. I want to talk to you, isn't it," said Mother to me one evening. She was dead serious, so I knew there was something momentous on her mind. "Now, Chaplain, why don't you become a Catholic? You're such an intelligent man, and the children love you, isn't it."

"That's why, Mother. I'm intelligent."

"Oh, now, Chaplain, shame on you! Ha, ha! But now look, Chaplain, you would make a wonderful Catholic."

"But I'm married, Mother, and my wife wouldn't care to be a nun."

"Oh, she must be lovely. But now we have a new order for married missionaries, isn't it. Father Roberts started it, isn't it. You would not take holy orders."

Mother Aimée is the best bit of propaganda the Catholic

Church has in India. I could say Amen to Mr. Mitra's statement: "If the Christians were all like Mother Aimée, Chaplain, you couldn't stop India from being Christian." Wherever I went in Eastern Bengal, Mother Aimée was known and loved, for she had served two terms as Mother Provincial, an assignment which took her all over the province. Her little parlor at the Convent was a retreat for all who were down-cast, Mohammedan and Christian; Hindu and Protestant. I met the wealthy Mr. Mitra there. He had just lost his oldest son, and in the desperation of hopelessness he went to Mother Aimée. He was crying bitterly when he went in and had to be supported by two of his relatives. He walked out firmly and courageously, and with a smile on his face. I've often wished I could have heard what she said to him. And yet he remained a staunch Hindu; so Mother never took advantage of his loss to preach Catholicism to him.

"The Indians," said Mother Aimée to me one evening, "are terrible people, isn't it, Chaplain."

I covered up by gulping hot tea.

"Yes. You never saw such people for nasty thought, isn't it, Chaplain. That is why we have these rules for the Sisters. We never go out except by two or more, and we never speak to a priest if we are alone."

"They actually think evil of you people, Mother?"

"Think evil! They think I am the Bishop's wife. Ha, ha, ha!" She got out her handkerchief to dab her eyes. "It's really funny what they think. As if the Bishop, bless the poor old man, would look at an old turkey like me, even if he wasn't a priest. Ha, ha, ha! And this will amuse you, Chaplain, isn't it, they think all the orphans are the children of the Sisters and the priests." Mother Aimée collapsed in mirth. "And they never even look at our color, Chaplain. Ha, ha, ha! We are white; all the children are almost black. And there

are only ten Sisters, but a hundred and fifty children. Fifteen each! Ha, ha, ha!

"But Indian morals are disgustingly low, isn't it, Chaplain; that's why they think so evil of everybody else. So we never let any of our girls marry anybody but Christians, isn't it."

I recalled the words of old Babu, our bearer, when I asked him if he were a Christian: "No, sur-r, no, sur-r! I am honest man, sur-r."

Mother Aimée continued: "And these Indian girls, Chaplain, they seem to lose their heads completely, isn't it, when there's a man around. They are seduced so easily that we have to be so careful, no?"

I guzzled more tea.

"And Eileen—you remember Eileen, Chaplain? The very fair one, isn't it. Well, she will be married on Saturday."

"Why, Mother! Eileen is just a child!"

"Yes, isn't it. Poor little thing! Only sixteen she is now. But listen, Chaplain, and I'll tell you about her, no?"

"Yes," I said.

"Eileen's daddy is a rich tea planter Darjeeling side. A Scotsman, I think. No, an Irishman. Casey, isn't it. Well, this man first married an Indian woman. You know how it is, Chaplain, isn't it, just wanted a woman; didn't love her, you see. Eileen is their child. After a while this woman lost her beauty, and then—you know how it is with men, Chaplain, isn't it."

"Ahem—yes. I believe I know what you mean, Mother."

"Yes. Well, he went back home and married a white woman; but he kept Eileen on the plantation. When this new wife learned about Eileen, she said, 'She's got to go out of my sight!' She wouldn't have the poor little thing on the place, not even for house room, isn't it; so her daddy brought her to me. That was four years ago."

Mother Aimée took out her handkerchief and wiped her eyes while I wriggled uncomfortably.

"Poor little thing! And she's crazy about her daddy. Used to go with him everywhere when she was little, and he worshiped her then. Now she writes to him every week, but he never answers her letters. Eileen says it isn't her daddy's fault; his new wife won't let him write. And every holiday she sends her daddy a present, isn't it.

"This Indian boy, a man really, Chaplain, he's thirty years old. He came to the Convent to see his little sister, and then he saw Eileen and wanted to marry her. I told him he'd have to write to her daddy about it. I thought she was too young, isn't it, Chaplain. And this is what her daddy said: He can marry Eileen if he signs a paper that he will not try to claim membership in his family for himself, for Eileen, or for her children, and that he will never write to them for help or recognition in any way, Chaplain. When Eileen marries this man, she passes out of her daddy's life forever."

"Why, the miserable, bigoted rat!" I began to explode.

"Yes. And she loves her daddy so, isn't it, and she is to be married Saturday. Sister Mary Carmel is working on her dress already. Oh, it will be beautiful! Chaplain, do me a favor, isn't it."

"Anything within my power, Mother, you know that."

"Yes. Well, come to the wedding, isn't it. It will be at eight o'clock in the morning in the Cathedral. She'd love to see at least one white man there. Perhaps she can tell other people it was her daddy. You understand, Chaplain, isn't it."

Mother Aimée fidgeted with her habit over this little bit of jesuit expediency, but I answered quickly, "I'll be there bright and early, Mother."

Eileen was as lovely a bride as I've ever seen. Any man with a heart bigger than a peanut would have been proud to

call her his child. After the ceremony I went up and wished them well. Eileen thanked me shyly, and I was moved to say, "Eileen, I represent a hundred and thirty million Americans with hearts as big as melons, and we wish you the best and the finest that life can hold."

She said nothing, simply because her lips began to tremble. And, by Jimminy! mine did, too.

"If you know anyone who would make a good husband for Sister Bertram, Chaplain, let me know, isn't it?"

You could have knocked me over with a steam roller! "A husband! I think you did say 'husband,' didn't you, Mother? Isn't it true, then, that nuns never marry, Mother?" I added.

"But Sister Bertram isn't a real nun, Chaplain. She's a refugee, really. And we took her in here because she had nowhere else to go, and she is a fine nurse, isn't it. But she should be married, I think, Chaplain."

I sensed a story here; so I drew Mother out with, "What makes you think so, Mother?"

"I'll tell you, Chaplain, because you will understand. Sister goes out caring for sick people in the town, and often she spends much time at the home of the Boses, where so many of the American boys go. Well, at the Boses she gets to hear lots of talk and gossip from the boys, isn't it; and when she brings them back here I'm afraid she embroiders them a little bit, perhaps; a lot, sometimes."

I don't like to hear gossip about our boys; so I was genuinely concerned. "What stories does she hear, Mother?"

"That's it, Chaplain. Always the same kind. Always about who's going to have a baby. About the American soldiers making eyes at the girls on the street and looking for bad houses, isn't it. And about the British boys running away with Indian girls and marrying them for the duration. It's always the same. And she wonders what Lieutenant Ericton

is doing at the Boses' so often, and what keeps Myra Bose up so late, at night. You know what I mean, isn't it, Chaplain?"

"H'm!"

"So I said to the Sisters: 'Sister Bertram needs a man to take her mind off such things.' They say you are a psychologist, Chaplain. Now what do you think? Tell me."

"I'd say that I'd come to you for lessons in psychology any old day, Mother. But I think you've hit the nail on the head in this case. Sister Bertram needs a man, and that right early."

"Yes. Then I'll speak to her and tell her she ought to get married, isn't it."

As might have been expected, Sister Bertram fell in with the suggestion at once, and the search was on. I cleared out to China the following week.

One evening, just after our game-song-story sessions, a group of the bigger girls came up to me and said: "A favor, Chaplain—do us a favor."

"Gladly, girls, what is it?"

"Wear this for us."

They held out a small miraculous Catholic medal with a picture of the Sacred Heart on one side and a picture of the Virgin on the other. One of them fished inside my neckband and attached it to my dog tags. Since I am a Protestant, I decided to tease them a little bit.

"And what will this medal do for me, girls?" I asked innocently.

"Protect you, Chaplain. No harm will come to you now. We pray for you every night, yes; but, if you wear this medal and never take it off, you will be safe."

"Now, isn't that remarkable!" I said in mock seriousness. "But let me think! Oh, yes! It comes to me now. Sure. I've

buried lots of men who had these medals around their necks, and they were just as dead as any other corpses, as I remember it."

The girls looked at one another in dismay. Then Julie said, "Yes, true, Chaplain?"

"Yes, true, Julie!"

The kids showed mingled mystification and consternation. Finally Curly's face brightened.

"Ah, yes, Chaplain; but their time had come anyway."

Tensions relaxed immediately. Their faith had been in the balance for a moment, but now it was all right again.

"What I need," I urged, "is something that will protect me when my time has come. We Protestants don't—"

"Protestant! Did you say 'Protestant,' Chaplain?"

"Sure did, girls. You knew I was a Protestant, didn't you?"

"And you've never been to confession and mass, Chaplain?"

The girls were bewildered and alarmed, and there was an awkward silence. Finally Delphine detached herself from the group and ran off. The others just stood looking at me blankly until Delphine returned.

"Mother Aimée knows," she panted. "She said it's all right; he's been blessed and turned over to the Little Flower."

Tensions again fell away like the other side of a hill, and the kids started to chatter once more. But it was a close call. At any rate, I've still got the medal attached to my dogtags and I intend to keep it there, and not only as a souvenir.

Just who was responsible for my being blessed and turned over to the protection of the Little Flower, I don't know; but if the state of my soul is what they call "blessed," then Heaven help the unblessed. After hearing the news about this blessing, I felt very much like the girl described by Will Durant: she was studying to be a virgin. At tea that evening



I brought up the matter of the Little Flower. Mother Aimée was only too glad to talk about it.

"When I was a little girl, Chaplain, I was sent from France to a Convent in England, isn't it. And oh, I was so homesick! I cried every day and all day. Then the Mother Superior came one day and said, 'You go home, no, child? You are much too young for a Convent, anyhow.'

"'No, Mother,' I said, 'if you just give me a book to read, I think I will be all right, isn't it.'

"So she gave me the Life of the Little Flower to read, Chaplain, and as soon as I opened the book to the first page, my homesickness was gone. Gone!" repeated Mother Aimée, bringing her open hands down on her knees with a slap. "And ever since that day, Chaplain, I have had countless favors from the lovely Little Flower."

"I have no faith in her at all!" chimed in the rawboned New Zealander, Sister Monica, who had entered just as Mother concluded her statement.

Mother was on her like a shot: "No. You haven't got faith, that's why. What about the flowers for the graves last year?"

"Oh, we would have got the flowers anyway, Mother."

I sought refuge in my old stand-by, the cup of hot tea which has to be blown and gurgled and slurped; but when the talk developed into a contest of favorite saints I coughed loudly and got up to go.

"Sit down there, Chaplain, I want to tell you about the Little Flower." Mother Aimée laughed and apologized. "We're always quarreling about our favorite saints, isn't it, Chaplain. We don't mean it, really though."

Then Mother regaled me for an hour on the miracles performed by the Little Flower of Lisieux. She ended by pressing a copy of the autobiography of the Little Flower into my hands. "Now tonight, Chaplain, at ten o'clock, isn't it,

you open the book and read a chapter, and the Little Flower will show you her favor, isn't it."

I don't know how to explain this, but at ten o'clock I opened the book as directed, and suddenly the whole room was filled with the fragrance of a million roses. I got up to look for them, thinking one of the boys in the other rooms had brought them in. But there were no roses anywhere. When I told Mother about it later, she explained that the rose was the favorite flower of St. Therese, the Little Flower. Of course, Mother was delighted over the experience, and took it as a sign that I was in safe hands at last.

The older girls became interested in what American boys call their sweethearts. They had tales from Snuffy, it seems, who had given them a few samples, such as Sugar Lips. Each one insisted that I dig up an American pet name for her, so to Snuffy's list I added "Lilly Pad," "Lilly Mug," "Candy Chops," "Sugar Foot," "Petal Ears," "Dumplin'," *ad nauseam*.

And the names I gave them stuck. "Isn't it foolish, Chaplain!" said Sister Anne one evening. "Delphine won't come any more unless I call her 'Lily Mug.' Oh, dear! 'Lily Mug'—of all the silly names! And Violet is 'Sugar Lips.' Can you imagine anything more ridiculous?"

But I didn't think so. I took one good look at Violet and I knew Snuffy had christened her right. Sugar Lips! That's what she was, doggonit!

My orders to go to China were in my pocket the last time I visited the Convent. We played the usual round of games-songs-stories, and then I called Mother Aimée and the Sisters and told them I was leaving for good. There was a stunned silence. Then Mother Aimée gave a command:

"The Little Flower! Quick, children, to the church!"

"We'll storm the gates of heaven!" breathed Sister Monica.

In the confusion I quietly beat it. I never really said goodbye. But that fount of sanity and charity in an insane world will never fade from my memory.

Within the first month of my stay in China I got a letter from Mother Aimée. I thrilled with anticipation over the nice things she might have to say about me and my work with the children. I began to feel very self-sacrificing, indeed. Fully prepared for a large dose of ego inflation, I opened the letter and read:

DEAR CHAPLAIN:

We are sure you had a safe journey. Now you will be glad to hear that since you left we have opened a kitchen for children between the ages of two and twelve . . .

How brief is fame!

And the letter from the children:

DEAR CHAPLAIN:

Last Sunday we went in Snuffy's truck, Lulu Belle, for the Corpus Christi procession. As we went rather early, we were able to have tea out at the post, and also a ride to the aerodrome. Snuffy stayed with us and brought all the girls back.

Snuffy! Snuffy! Snuffy! Tsk! Tsk!

Ah, but here was something for me at last:

Last Sunday, a plane went low over the Convent, and all the children thought you had come back, but no one came in the evening except Snuffy . . .

Oh, oh!

## LET NOTHING YOU DISMAY

IT WAS delightfully cool for a change; so most of the boys were trying to catch up on their flying time. They were succeeding reasonably well, too, despite the efforts of a cheap, portable phonograph which insisted on spraying its barbarhythm from the room next to mine. I had just come in from dinner and was settling down to letter writing when I heard Greenwald burst into the next room all out of breath.

"Where's Peeler? Anyone seen Peeler?"

Someone turned off the phonograph. Evidently it was Hot Shot, for I heard: "Where the — do ya think? I can't get him up. Perhaps you can." With that he stamped out through the door.

Greenwald rushed over to Peeler's bunk and shook him vigorously. "Peeler!" he yelled. "Peeler! Quick! Get up! I got something!"

"Huh? Who? Huh! Lemme alone! I ain't no eager beaver."

"Peeler! Come on, this is hot stuff."

It was always a job to get Peeler out of bed. I smiled now as I recalled the imbecilic smile which had crept over his face like an animated mask the time I tried it.

"Come on!" urged Greenwald impatiently. "Outa that sack! I got news," he added, lowering his voice. "An' I mean *news*."

"I don't see no hurry," Peeler grumbled. "It's going to be a long war." He slipped into his wooden sandals and slap-slapped across the floor. "Now. What's all this — excitement

about?" he demanded. "You'd think the beer ration was in. Is it?" He paused suddenly at the possibility which had escaped him.

"No, but I got something else. Women!" Greenwald said, lowering his voice to achieve the proper degree of mysteriousness. He paused, waiting, no doubt, for the full import of this remarkable statement to seep into Peeler's skull. "White women!" And again he waited.

"You mean *white* white women?"

This emphasis, "*white* white," was necessary because of a peculiar psychological change that had come over our boys since landing in India. When they first arrived, a light brown woman was seen as black. After a couple of months the same shade of skin pigmentation looked perfectly white to them. Thus it is necessary to distinguish between white white and dark white.

"That's what I mean: *white* white women."

In no time at all Peeler was fully awake. "They must 'a' come over with the beer ship," he said thoughtfully. "I heard they was getting up a woman's army back home, but I figures they goin' to send 'em all to Texas to keep the G.I.'s from riotin'. Could be Texas ain't so bad if they got women."

"Not U.S. women; Polish women," said Greenwald abruptly. He seemed to be getting a little impatient with Peeler.

"Oh, that's diff— No, it ain't. Sure. Polish women are white women. How many you got lined up, Greeny?"

"Three hundred!"

"Three hundred! Don't give me that stuff. If they's three hundred white women in town, they's three thousand G.I.'s ahead of us, and they're bigger and stronger and tougher."

"But these ain't in town." Greenwald was letting his information trickle slowly into Peeler's noggin. Sudden truth

is almost always fatal to a G.I. whose sack time has been interrupted in the middle of the day. That's the cause of most Section Eights, according to the figures.

"They ain't in town. They's outside in a refugee camp. Three hundred of them. All girls between the ages of fourteen and twenty. 'Vacuated from Poland to save 'em from becoming *Fraus*,'" explained Greenwald patiently. "And only two old priests lookin' after 'em."

"How did you come onto it, and why ain't there a thousand G.I.'s waitin' around?" asked Peeler doubtfully. "And what are you doin' there, seein' as how this is Sunday, and your heavy day with the Chaplain?"

"'Cause it's off-limits," said Greenwald, answering only part of the quiz. "An' it's off limits because they catch a coupla dozen G.I.'s around there every night snoopin'. So the old priests in charge asks the General to have it put off limits. So now it's off limits to us and the Limeys."

"You mean the Limeys are interested in women?" Peeler was incredulous.

"No. Culture."

"Oh. But what good is it to us if it's off limits? I know! You got maneuvers!" And Peeler caught on. Which was the signal for Greenwald to go into details.

"It's like this," began Greenwald. "Me and the Chaplain are drivin' to town when we see this sign which says, 'Polish Refugee Camp—Off Limits to British and American Troops.'"

"The Chaplain swings the jeep in as soon as he spots it, and we drive back into the desert for about a mile and a half until we come to this bunch of tents and shacks. The guard won't let us in, but finally he sends for somebody who can talk United States. And before you know it, the prettiest yellow-haired gal is takin' us to the C.O., this old priest—"

"Yellow hair on 'em, too?"

"Ain't I tellin' you, *white* white women! This old priest, Father Chuckemoutsky or something, greets us pretty cool at first, but when the Chaplain points to the cross on his collar, it's letusinsky from then on."

"So you got it cinched!" Peeler was jubilant.

"Not yet. But gimme time! Gimme time!"

"Teek hai, sahib!" responded Peeler. And they sauntered off to perfect their plan of campaign.

The principal feature of the plan, I discovered later to my dismay, was "borrowing" some of my Chaplain's collar crosses so that they could gain access to the refugee camp. Once in, they could offer to show two of the girls the sights of the town. As far as Greenwald could see, it could go on indefinitely, or until all three hundred had been shown the sights. Then the first ones would probably have forgotten, and they could start all over again. Getting the Crosses for their escapade was simple, since Greenwald was my clerk.

Peeler and Greenwald arrived at the refugee camp in the message center carry-all. Father Slingemoutsky received them courteously enough. He judged from their clothes that they were officers—you know how the G.I.'s dress in India, bush coats, and all that stuff, like Limey generals. From the crosses on their collars he judged they were chaplains. And from their faces, if he were honest, he judged they were atavists of the lowest order. The boys spent a half-hour trying to make the old lad understand what they wanted, and when he finally caught on, he beamed like Churchill and said, "Zchks! Zchks!"—which Peeler said was Polish for "Teek hai, sahib." He motioned the boys to be seated, and off he went, presumably after the girls; Peeler and Greenwald made thumb-and-finger circles at each other. It was in the bag; the old boy was going to do the needful and oblige.

In fifteen minutes the Father was back, nodding his head approvingly and beaming like a Brahmin with baksheesh, which prompted Peeler to such a burst of generosity that he gave the old man an American cigar—just like that! He sat down and put his fat hands on his knees and let forth a stream of Polish at the boys, who nodded and nodded and nodded, downwards and crossways. And in trundled the two fattest cooks you'd ever wish to behold. The jaws of both Peeler and Greenwald dropped as if the nurse had just announced twin girls.

Olga and Volga were twins, all right. Olga weighed in around two hundred pounds on the hoof. Volga was almost slender at a hundred and ninety pounds undressed. Only Peeler, who grabbed her first, didn't want to see her undressed—his eyes wouldn't spread that far without clicking out of joint.

Without erasing their false smiles, the boys held a hurried consultation in pig Latin, the upshot of which was that they should go through with the deal for the sake of the next time when, no doubt, they would draw a pair of yellow-haired eighteen-year-olds. If there were only some way to disguise themselves when they got to town! Would their names be mud when the G.I.'s from the outfit saw them jostling Olga and Volga along the sidewalks! Maybe they ought to leave the crosses on their collars and screw up their faces to look like real chaplains. One thing was sure: These portly Poles were going to do their reputation a lot of no good. Greenwald made a rapid mental adjustment by labeling the project "International Good Will." Peeler could make no adjustment apart from resolving to run away when they got into a crowd, and afterwards bawl Greenwald out for losing him deliberately.

With almost no assistance from Greenwald's shoulder, the



girls were loaded into the carry-all, and the party started off to brave the howls of the G.I.'s in the town. But it never came to that. What is it they say about the Devil taking care of his own? Anyway, there must be something to it, for unconsciously Greenwald parked the car outside Fu King's Restaurant, and that led to the suggestion that they go inside and eat some ice cream.

They were barely seated when up rushed an R.A.F. shouting, "Olga! Volga!" and trying to embrace parts of both girls at the same time—a job that would have taxed an octopus. It turned out that Wenskzc was a friend of the girls. After the introduction he explained to the boys that Olga and Volga were matrons in charge of the girls at the camp. So Peeler and Greenwald saw a great light. They exchanged significant glances and nods, and slapped good old Wenskzc on the back and hustled him into the party. The poor dope was delighted, and the whole party set off for the Palace to sweat out "Gone with the Wind"; Wenskzc and the nymphs ahead, and Greenwald and Peeler serving as the rear echelon and dropping farther and farther to the rear. When they got to the alley, near Speechley's, they ducked in and disappeared.

Two nights later the boys were again at the refugee camp to apologize for having lost the girls. They had gotten into such an animated discussion over the problems of postwar Poland, they said, that they hadn't noticed Wenskzc and the girls turn off. They were getting away with it, too! so successfully, that they failed to hear me drive up to the tent which served as the reception hall. Before they realized it, I was upon them, coming in behind a perfectly gorgeous bit of fluff with yellow hair. The boys goggled at her for fully a minute before they realized their position; then they went into a violent fit of coughing which so doubled them over that I

pretended alarm and said, "My, oh, my, boys!" They were soon over it, though, and when they straightened up one might have noticed that the crosses on their collars had been purged.

"We came here, sir," said Greenwald, taking command of the situation, "to see if we couldn't do something about a Christmas party for these poor people. We got plenty of talent and money. You know that, sir."

"I am touched, Greenwald. Deeply touched," I said in mock fervor. "I must confess that your statement surprised me no little. I had nearly despaired of your regeneration. So you see, you have touched me profoundly." And then: "And you, too, Peeler, my good fellow. A Christmas party for the Polish refugees! What a saving idea! Yes, indeed! I must really compliment you both. And especially you, Greenwald."

"Oh, it's not so much my idea, sir," said Greenwald. "Chick, here, well, the fellows asks me and Peeler here to feel 'em—that is, to feel 'em out," he added hastily.

"A worthy impulse, none the less." Turning to Peeler, I remarked, "I shall see that your Commanding Officer hears of this, my good fellow."

"—, no! That is—I mean—Scuse me, sir. Don't let your left hand—you know the old stuff, sir. Keep it dark, I mean."

"Well, well, well! Now I have misjudged you both. It just goes to show that the old proverb is still good:

"There is so much good in the worst of us,  
And so much bad in the best of us,  
That it ill behooves any of us  
To talk about the rest of us."

I gave the impression of being so overwhelmed by the Christmas party idea that Greenwald had to cook up something in a hurry to avoid discovery. To suggest a Christmas

party to the outfit was to cut the biggest pack of wolves in India in on a good thing. And yet, there was no help for it. And did the idea find a home! In no time at all, the boys were organized to check up on Greenwald's story. Scouting parties were sent out to ascertain if the girls were really as described in the invoice. When the scouts returned with their report, the post was committed to a Polish campaign in the grand manner, and committees were formed in each squadron to arrange details.

At first it was planned to split the girls into three groups and place a group in each squadron. Each squadron would then arrange a dinner and Christmas program. As might be imagined, there was great inter-squadron rivalry which at times flared out into open warfare. The 90th boys hurled out a telling challenge in the collection of fourteen hundred rupees as a party chest. And there was plenty more if needed, too. The schemes and wiles of the post poker sharks to get at the keepers of the funds would fill a manual on military strategy and tactics. Chick Peeler, for instance, was constantly hanging around the 90th barracks, on the prowl, so to speak.

There was much to be done with the time so short—a scant three weeks until Christmas. Since the refugee camp was off limits, the General's permission had to be secured. And there the boys hit the first snag, which nearly wrecked the whole idea. It wasn't that the General was against the idea. Quite the opposite: he was so much for it that he ordered all the other outfits to plan a similar party. "Good for morale," was the way he put it. That meant a cut in the quota of girls for Peeler's outfit. Various G.I.'s traced the General's ancestry for him in case he hadn't done it himself, and then they settled down to a readjustment of their plans.

Some of the boys began to lose heart after the General's order to the other outfits, but they soon snapped out of it

when a committee of girls from the camp came over to find out what it was all about. It was a field day for the G.I.'s who could stutter a little Polish. The visit of the girls started a new wave of enthusiasm and activity. It was decided to hire special cooks with a flair for garlic. If they could not be hired, they were to be high-jacked. The Chinese cooks in town were offered fabulous sums if they could cook with garlic, but their response was uniform: "No glalic. No got-tee."

"And no cookee," replied our boys.

Barracks were thoroughly cleaned out, and many things long given up for lost came to light. Clothes were washed with soap. Colored paper was strung up. The mess halls were decorated. Chinese lanterns at two rupees per were hung from everything that would support one. Tablecloths were bought. Speeches were prepared by the squadron wits. Quartets, sextets, and octets practiced and gargled alternately. Carols broke out in every barracks; everybody was God-resting merry gentlemen or harking to the herald angels sing.

It was an amazing thing, all right. Here we were, in a desert with the temperature in the upper eighties. No snow. No Salvation Army lassies ringing bells on the street corners. No Christmas trees. No Santa Clauses scaring the kids half to death in the stores. No Christmas radio programs. Nothing to suggest Christmas. And yet, there was more Christmas spirit floating around the camp than there is mud in Bengal. And it was all due to these Polish kids. Every G.I. there wanted to see Christmas reflected in the eyes of these girls. These Polish girls were white. They were Christian. They would understand what went on in Private G. I.'s heart. The Hindus never would. Christmas seemed like a temporary madness to them, during which baksheesh flowed like water.

Greenwald and Peeler contemplated the whole thing sor-

rowfully. The affair had grown too big for them, and now they were relegated to one of the minor committees. They showed a spurt of interest when someone broke into the mess hall and stole the liquor hoard. They joined the rest of the boys in a wild dash to town to procure another supply before stocks were exhausted, and to help in turning up new and better vintages.

Five days before the big event the blow fell. Micky Malcolm of the Red Cross called up to say that the plans would have to be altered. All but fifty of the girls were to be sent to a new camp in South India, he explained, and they were to leave before Christmas. Of course, there had been rumors about transferring the refugees to a new and better camp, but no one dreamed that the authorities would do such a thing at Christmas time.

Fifty girls! Why, the station hospital had arranged to take a hundred alone. The boys on their backs had worked feverishly getting ready for the Polish refugees. They had made their own decorations and even made gifts for the girls. They had contributed a thousand rupees, and the doctors and nurses had matched it. Those nurses! They'll never know what they meant to those lads on their backs. Lovely girls, they were, too. Humorous and tender—which showed up particularly when Major, the 90th's bulldog who had traveled with the outfit from the States, was shot and badly wounded. The girls smuggled him into the hospital and bullied the surgeon into a full-scale operation with all the trimmings. And when Major died of gangrene, they cried over him like kids. And an American girl crying over a pup means something to Private G. I., no matter in what benighted land he may be.

What could the boys do, then, but step gracefully aside and let the Polish girls go to the hospital party? And they

really threw a party, I can tell you. But the Christmas spirit in the hearts of our boys died out as definitely as the petticoat. Plans were changed at once to substitute a series of binges for the Christmas party for the Polish refugees. It promised to be a case of week-long hangovers. Then the C.O. stepped in.

With the intuition of a born leader, the Colonel sensed that something had happened in Private G. I.'s head. He realized, too, that the situation was worse than if no party had ever been planned. He called me in.

"Chaplain," began the Colonel, "the celebration of Christmas is usually a function of your department. Have you done anything about it?"

"Not very much, sir. This Christmas party seemed to be taking up all of our energies, and it was a fine thing, too."

"Well, that's gone up the spout now, as you know. Something has to be done to revive the old Christmas spirit around here. I don't want these men to spend Christmas away from home on a half-dozen wild parties. I want them to sit down and think about home and what it all means to them. This is where you take over, Chaplain. It's a tough spot, I know, but what can you do?"

"Perhaps it won't be so difficult as you think, sir. Suppose we keep in mind the fact that the idea behind Christmas is infinitely bigger than the Polish Refugees. It might be well for us to remember that the story of Christ has been the inspiration of the highest elements of our culture. It has stood the test of time, sir, and of trying situations. It will do so again, I'm sure."

The Colonel laughed. "Oh, sure! But don't forget, Chaplain, we have only five days. No—four and a half days."

"And Jesus was born in five minutes, sir. His program ought to inspire us to achieve something bigger than a party for the

Polish refugees. Let's put it up to the men, being sure, of course, to point out that our Christmas observance must be pitched higher. It must not be a comedown."

"O.K., Chaplain. It's your baby from now on. And you've got my full power behind you."

We called all of the Christmas committees together for a conference. There wasn't much enthusiasm; but that was to be expected. No reference was made to the defunct Christmas party beyond a remark or two about how the girls would have enjoyed it.

"Men," I said, getting down to business at once, "as you know, we have suffered a blow to our morale. The prospect of a happy Christmas far from home has been blasted by unforeseen circumstances just as we were thinking that it was all set. We as a committee are now called upon to save the day and, if possible, turn defeat into victory. It is a thankless task so late in the day, and yet I am sure that each of you feels it a duty not to let the men down."

There were nods of approval and an adjustment of positions which indicated stirrings of interest.

"For many of these boys," I continued, "it will be the first Christmas away from home. Upon our shoulders rests, then, the responsibility of showing them a real Christmas. Before I call for suggestions, there is one thing I want you to bear in mind: Whatever program we undertake for the benefit of the camp as a whole must not be a makeshift, second-rate affair. It must be the real thing. Now, your suggestions, men."

There was an awkward silence, punctuated by the shuffling of feet. Finally, Sib, the Mess Officer, cleared his throat and said, "Anything we can do, just call on us, Chaplain."

Everybody looked relieved and followed up with a chorus of "Sure!"

"Thanks, men. But the point is, I *am* calling on you *now*. I'm calling on you for some quick thinking and for some good ideas. Our task is difficult, to be sure. I realize there is little here to remind us of home: no snow, no ice, no Christmas trees, no carols. Nothing."

"Sir!"

All heads turned around. Chick Peeler had been leaning his chair back against the wall; now he let it fall forward with a bang.

"Sir, I got an idea."

There was an instant bustle of feet, and a clearing of throats to be ready to head Peeler off. Peeler gets plenty of ideas, yes. But not the kind needed now. A sweepstake or a raffle was the limit of his thinking at Christmas time, we felt. But I took a chance.

"Let's have it, Peeler."

"Sir! Me and Greenwald had a lot to do in getting this Christmas party idea started on this post."

I nodded agreement.

"I been thinkin', since this party for them Polish wrens fell through, that we ought to do something."

"That's fine of you, Peeler. But I thought you said you had an idea."

"I have. I brought a little yarn along with me that I'd like to read to you guys, and I want you to mark down all the things I mentions which we got or can get here in this desert."

This was going to be a little tiresome; but the committee leaned back to sweat out Peeler's story. There was nothing else to do, anyway. Peeler unfolded a sheet of paper and read:

"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.



And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. And all the world went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David), to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. . . .

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.”

When the rich, deep voice of Peeler had finished the majestic King James Version of the greatest story ever told, one could have heard a spider web. The committee had a collective lump in its throat, and no one had thought to do the thing which Peeler suggested, namely, write down all the things mentioned in the story which were available here in this part of India.

"Read it again, Peeler," I suggested, "and this time lay emphasis upon the things you have in mind."

"When Peeler had finished there was a chorus of "cattle," "donkeys," "stable," "flocks," "goats," "sheep," "wise men," "camels."

"Sure thing," said Peeler. "I'm a Catholic when I was a kid, and every year our church puts up one of them birth-of-Jesus scenes with lights and angels and all that stuff. You know, you seen them things back home."

"But we don't have time to make all that stuff now," said Captain Arthur. "We've got to get out a program in a couple of days."

"Sir! Why go to all the trouble to make this stuff when we got it made ready for us?" asked Peeler.

There was silence again. The magnitude of Peeler's idea was struggling to break upon us. No one seemed able to make the final leap from words to things.

"The open-air chapel platform is about forty feet long," prompted Peeler, "and the 90th's got floodlights."

"Are you proposing that we stage the birth of Jesus with real characters and real animals, Peeler?" The idea astounded me.

"Why not, sir?"

"You mean real camels, real shepherds with flocks, and real donkeys in the stable, and real wise men?" It was Sib's turn to be surprised.

"You can't have real wise men, sir. There's only me and Greenwald, and we need three of 'em. Just take three officers and dress 'em up a bit, and nobody will know the difference," added Peeler with a wink at Greenwald.

"Of course," said Arthur, "it's easier to use the real thing than to try to imitate it. I never thought of that before. Only it *seems* so big, I guess."

"Baksheesh!" said Peeler. "Baksheesh, and we'll have all the natives here with their flocks and herds and cattle."

"Do you think it can be done, men?" I asked. "It would be magnificent, no doubt, but I'm rather a dunce at such things."

"Chaplain," said Burr, "if you want this thing, we'll put it on. What do you say?"

"It will cost—"

"Heck with the cost!" voiced the committee in unison. "We've got loads of shekels in the fund."

"It really would be magnificent," I agreed. "The only thing like it in the world probably, and never to be repeated in India for years and years, perhaps."

Responsibilities were assigned on the spot, and the many major jobs delegated to the different squadrons. Animals, shepherds, wise men, donkeys, camels, lights, a lighted cross, a stable, a manger—all these things were taken care of with amazing speed and enthusiasm.

A separate group was charged with getting up the program which was to be presented against the background of this Nativity Tableau.

The Colonel was true to his word, too. The boys had free call on transportation, with the result that nearly every foot of ground for miles around was combed for the necessary props and equipment.

In order to give some reality to our Christmas celebration I suggested that we collect a little money for the children at the Convent. The idea caught on like an Englishman to last year's joke. My original idea was to give the money we collected to the Sisters to buy something for the children, but by the time old Private G. I. was through with his thinking on the subject, he had cooked up a Christmas party that was a Christmas party. It frightened me. I let go of the thing with

fear and trembling, knowing full well that if it was a success, I'd get my share of the credit.

Having a Christmas party for the children gave us the idea of getting a Christmas tree, but of course, we knew there were no Christmas trees in the vicinity—we knew it only until the Dickens committee located one on the lawn of some mansion and casually reported it to the central committee. Right then that tree was as good as ours.

The only Christmas tree to be had cost us sixty rupees and four hours of coaxing, cajoling, and begging. Once the money was paid, our boys put a guard on the tree in case some other group accidentally discovered it. So there we were: a Christmas tree and even kids to see it and go into ecstasies over it.

And were our boys pepped up! The only thing of its kind in the vicinity! The only gang of Christian kids available! And the only copy of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*! The old American psychology of pulling off the impossible gripped our boys with the tenacity of a cocklebur in a blanket. We even had Russell, the only chap in India who could imitate Lionel Barrymore so that no one could tell the difference. He was to read the story of old Scrooge at the program after the dinner for the children.

A quaint incident occurred in connection with this story of old Scrooge. Cobb and Russell were on the committee to find a copy of the story. They had turned the town upside down and inside out trying to locate one, but there simply wasn't a copy anywhere. The fellows tried every bookshop, library, hospital, club, police station, and European family in town. There was no time to send for one, even if we knew where to send. And even if we got one the last minute it would hardly do, because it would have to be cut and edited

from ninety pages to about fifteen in order to get it in the allotted twenty minutes on the program.

"There's just one more place," said Cobb. "The Bengar Club. If they don't have it, then we'll have to do without it. And what is Christmas without Lionel Barrymore reading the story of Bob Cratchit and old Scrooge?"

"Lead on!" said Russell. "I'm with you, if you know how to get there."

"I believe it's that big place on Victoria Street—you know, the one with the British flag flying over it."

The boys drove up to this place in the jeep and walked in. They saw no one around despite the fact that it was loaded down with costly silver.

"Hi, there!" yelled Cobb. "Hi! Anyone in charge of this dump?"

"Only me."

"Huh! Oh, scuse us, ma'am," said Cobb, thinking he was talking to the housekeeper. "I want to talk to some one who knows what they got in this shack."

"Perhaps I'll do." The lady smiled mischievously.

"Could be. But I want a book. This is a high-class book," Russell broke in, looking the lady over doubtfully.

"I've just made tea. Do come in and have some, won't you? We can talk about the book after."

"Oh, sure! Anything to oblige a lady," grinned the boys, and in they went to tea and cakes galore.

"What's your job in this morgue, Mrs.?" asked the friendly Cobb between mouthfuls of cake.

"Oh, I rather look after the place, don't you know?"

"Too big. Too big a job for you ma'am. You should make 'em give you some more servants and bearers. American cigarette, ma'am?" holding out the packet.

"Delighted! I haven't had an American cigarette since I was

in Virginia some years ago. Come, have some more tea. And finish up the cakes, do!"

"Thanks! Thanks! Pretty good chow if you ask me. How about it, Russ?"

"Teek, Sah'b."

"And now your book. What was the name of it, Mr.—er—"

"Russell. I'm Russ; he's Cobby."

"Delighted to know you, Russ and Cobby. Now what was the name of the book?" The charming lady flicked the ash off the end of her cigarette with the finesse of the expert.

"Dickens, ma'am. Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Scrooge and Bob Cratchit, you know."

"I'm sure I don't have it."

The lady crossed to the bookshelf, and by gosh! The first book she picked up was a collection of Dickens' works. *A Christmas Carol* took up the first ninety-four pages. Russell looked through it feverishly to be sure it was all there. The flyleaf caught his eye: "To my friend, Lady Furness, with best wishes. Bill." He looked up quickly.

"You are—"

"The housekeeper, Mrs. Furness."

Gulp! "The wife of"—*gulp*—"the British Governor of the Province, General Furness?"

"That's right. But have some more tea."

"Oh, —!" And those two G.I.'s fairly spouted consternation. They got up hurriedly.

"And when you return the book, do come at this same time. We'll have tea again and the General will be here. I'm sure he'd like to meet you."

"Yes'm!"

And the boys backed out with a cross between a salute and a bow.

"—!" said Cobb. "I thought them ladies had something in their eyes so they can't see G.I.'s. Could be she ain't a real lady."

"—, yes! She ain't no phony," defended Russell. "Didn't you see how she held her little finger when she drunk that tea? Just the same as me."

And that settled Lady Furness' status. Definitely.

I got in on a few of the committee meetings. The profanity would have made Popeye blush. But the ideas they spilled—well! We were gratified to learn, finally, that every committee had been successful; the natives had all succumbed to lavish baksheesh—even though they were Mohammedans. Allah was nowhere in the running when our boys were around with the rupees. The program as it appeared finally included a trip around the field with a visit and a chance for the children to crawl all over the airplanes; supper in the squadron mess halls; a movie; and a party in the Red Cross Hall, the high point of which was to be the distribution of presents. There were only eighty children, but the boys collected nearly enough for eight hundred, and they turned the fund over to the Sisters with instructions to buy every kid a complete new outfit from head to toes and to pack each outfit in a separate package with the child's name on it and to have the packages out at the post to be distributed after supper. The affair was to close with a Christmas program at the outdoor chapel.

The Red Cross girls, Marge Write and Jerry Adams and Mrs. Connors, worked like slaves to get things in shape for the affair. They decorated the hall just as it would have been decorated at home, and they baked fruit cakes and packed bags of candy for all of the children.

And then it came! Christmas Eve, the delight of all Chris-

tendom. By three o'clock the trucks and jeeps had arrived with the children; and they were yelling and shouting and eager! Just like kids at home.

"Kids are just the same all over the world," someone observed.

"Yeah, man!" we agreed.

All of the Sisters came, too. My heart stopped when I saw Peeler handing one of them a G.I. eggnog. "It is medicine," he was saying. "All the fellows here take it when they don't feel good." My first thought was to intervene immediately, having tasted those G.I. eggnogs when I was green and foolish, but I let it pass.

The children were stupefied. They sat through the movie in silent awe, never having had the chance to see one before. The picture the boys saved for them was Monty Woolley in "The Pied Piper." And quite appropriate, too.

The big time came when the presents were distributed. The G.I.'s took those dusky youngsters right into their hearts, and did they have a time! The boys were vying with one another in cramming rupee notes into the hands of the children. Those kids had handfuls of baksheesh.

By seven-fifty the candy and gifts were stowed away, and everybody set out for the chapel. I shall never forget that program. The whole place was dark; only the light of the stars guided us to the site. As we approached, the choir sang "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen," and just as soon as we were seated the floodlights flashed on and we beheld the most magnificent Nativity Tableau that the skill of man could fashion. There in the left front were three camels and three wise men offering gifts. The men and animals stood like statues. The camels were gorgeously arrayed in brilliant trappings, and the clothing of the native drivers was in keeping with what one sees in the paintings of this scene. Off to



the right was the Christmas tree ablaze with colored lights. And a magnificent tree it was, too. In the front and looking into the stable, which was raised about four feet off the ground, kneeled the shepherds surrounded by their flocks of sheep and goats. The stable was the most realistic thing of all. It was the genuine article which the boys had brought over from some native farmer. The manger was about eight feet long. Behind it, contentedly nibbling hay, stood a few small donkeys, and over to the right, a cow and a calf lay chewing their cuds. In front of the manger and to the left sat the Virgin (one of our favorite nurses), dressed in a snow-white garment. A shaft of light from the star which surmounted the whole tableau played on the babe in the manger. Away in the background the choir was singing softly, "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing."

The silence was as soothing as white velvet. I looked around. Every G.I. there was awe-struck by the spectacle, and many a man swallowed hard, if the truth were told. Good old G.I! You can always rely on him to come through, I thought to myself. And I pondered the terrific amount of time, money, and labor that had gone into this Christmas program.

The choir was done. I arose to read the Christmas story. And I'll tell you, never has that story seemed as wonderful to me as it did then, with the actual scene before me. One number followed after another like clockwork: the Colonel's address, old Scrooge, the carols. If you've never heard hundreds of homesick G.I.'s sing Christmas carols, then you have a treat in store. The Red Cross girls were soon in tears as we ran the gamut from "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing" right down to "Silent Night, Holy Night." I closed the festivities with the following prayer:

Dear Lord and Father of us all, though we stand with our feet in a world gone wild with hate and lust, our hearts are turned toward the heavens; for once more we welcome the Prince of Peace, whose touch alone can mend our madness.

And may His coming hallow us with the memories of the scenes we have loved in that fair land beyond the sea; the pure laughter of little children; the concern of goodly neighbors for the sick and the needy; the musical message of the carols; the cheer of the fire burning brightly on the hearth; the wistfulness of Mother and Dad as they wait patiently for loved ones, for brave ones who may never come again; the comradeship of sincere friends and happy sweethearts; and our thanksgiving to God as the bells ring out to proclaim the birth of the Christ Child. And in these hallowed memories may we find that love of humankind which will enable us to forgive and forget the horrors of a war in which we, too, have perhaps unwittingly played a part.

In Thy mercy, Lord, look down upon those at home and abroad who are giving their all in a cause which they believe to be right. And if there are such among us as would use the sufferings of our people for selfish ends, reveal Thyself to them in Thy humility and Thy pity, that the spirit of self-sacrifice, the spirit of Christmas, may come upon them wholly.

O Thou who hast blest our leaders in the past with wisdom and foresight, depart not from them now as we stand upon the threshold of another year of trial. Do Thou continue to endow them with Thy light, for without Thee at their sides we are lost.

Come, then, Lord Jesus, and enter our hearts, that thoughts which are hard and bitter may dissolve in the glory of Thy redeeming grace, and that peace, the desire of every earnest soul, may reign once more among men. Amen.

Through it all the Tableau stood like a magnificent carving. The program closed as softly as it had begun. It seemed to fade away like a vision on the lovely tones of "Silent

Night, Holy Night." We were half singing and half humming the last verse, and as we reached the end, the lights faded.

We trooped silently to our barracks as in the distance behind us we heard the choir softly singing, "God rest you merry, gentlemen, let nothing you dismay." No one had any inclination for a booze party after that. We preferred to spend the rest of the evening together in our barracks talking and thinking of Christmas at home in the Good Old U.S.A. And ever against the background of our conversation and our thoughts ran the strain, "Let nothing you dismay! Let nothing you dismay!"

And that was the meaning of Christmas in India for lovable, patient, profane, generous old G.I. God grant that nothing ever will him dismay, or we are lost!

## OUR FLAG

See! Our country's flag is waving  
Over village, field and town;  
Symbol to the nation's children  
Of the glorious land they own.  
Let us now recall her story  
And with reverent voices raise  
Songs proclaiming high her glory;  
Hymns o'erburdened with her praise.  
Like a holy light that shineth,  
Let her hallow all our ways.

See her now on God's horizon  
Flashing, rippling in the breeze.  
Hope of men of every nation  
Fevered still by war's disease.  
In her folds the weary stranger  
Seeks and finds a safe retreat.  
Born of hope and sired by danger  
Never has she known defeat;  
In the strife for right and justice  
May she triumph, Lord, complete.

THOMAS H. CLARE







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